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THE MILITANT SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

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EMANCIPATION IN A HURRY

BY
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DEDICATION

To the women who know me and will understand

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The author desires to state that the matter of the three articles which appeared in "The New Age" has been incorporated in part in this book.

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THE MILITANT SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

CHAPTER I

PERSONAL FOREWORD

I WRITE this book in criticism of the militant suffrage movement because I am impelled to do so by forces as strong as those which kept me five years within its ranks. I write because I am convinced that speech is necessary, because I know that no one else so well acquainted with the facts is prepared to speak, because I cannot keep silent longer without self-contempt.

I would be clearly understood from the first, and so I set down here at the beginning my confession of faith and the articles of my unbelief. I am a feminist, a rebel, and a suffragist—a believer, therefore, in sex-equality and militant action. I desire to see woman

free and human; I seek her complete emancipation from all shackles of law and custom, from all chains of sentiment and superstition, from all outer imposed disabilities and cherished inner bondages which unite to shut off liberty from the human soul borne in her body. I believe that woman is in freedom the equal of man, and that any disabilities imposed by man upon woman or by woman upon man are evil. Against all such evils I believe in the sacred duty of insurrection. Women, along with every other unjustly restricted class, are not only entitled to revolt but have revolt imposed upon them; it is their gateway to liberty. This, and all that it implies, I believe.

I do not believe in the modern militant suffrage movement. I have believed in it, worked in it, suffered in it, and rejoiced in it, and I have been disillusioned. I do not believe in votes for women as a panacea of all evils. I do not believe that any and every interest and consideration and principle should be sacrificed to the immediate getting of any measure of suffrage legislation. Votes for

women we must have, and many other things for women; but votes for women over-hurried and at any price may cost us too dear. I do not believe that woman is the superior of man any more than I believe that she is his inferior. Pretensions of sex-superiority are like bad coins; they are just as bad whichever face is turned up. I do not believe that the best avenue for the emancipation of women is through emotionalism, personal tyranny, and fanaticism. To none of these things do I subscribe.

I am setting out to condemn the militant suffrage movement, but not to condemn militancy, for I shall be a militant rebel to the end of my days. I am setting out to expose the tone and tactics of the Women's Social and Political Union and the suicidal weakness of the Women's Freedom League. I have served in both these societies, have shared the burdens of the early days in both, have had my part in their successes and in their failures, and now I find both inadequate, fallen from a high estate full of promise to narrowness and incapacity. I do not condemn the

present day militancy because it has gone too far. I fear that it has not gone far enough, and that it will never rise to the heights to which it originally showed potential claim. What I condemn in militant tactics is the small pettiness, the crooked course, the double shuffle between revolution and injured innocence, the playing for effects and not for results—in short, the exploitation of revolutionary forces and enthusiastic women for the purposes of advertisement. These are the things by which militancy has been degraded from revolution into political chicane; these are the means by which it has been led to perjure its soul: it is against these evils that I mean to use the whole strength of my power of protest. I am not at all concerned that the militant movement has outraged convention, that it has shocked self-satisfied and blind benevolence, that it has made the exquisite and dainty suffer pangs of revulsion against sordid realities; it is not for convention that I plead. The crime of the militant suffrage movement in my eyes is that it is not real, that it is itself dangerously and

determinedly conventional, that its militancy claims to be but is not revolution, that it has given itself over to the demon of hurry and has abused the great cleansing forces by means of which the world is carried into purgatorial fires and brought out purified. Other movements have failed in rebellion, but it has been left to this woman's movement to ape rebellion while belittling and abusing it. Other rebellions have failed; this movement has failed rebellion.

I undertake the task of critic very unwillingly, for I have the common desire shared by all healthy people to escape martyrdom and to spend my days in peace. But no one so well qualified to deal with the movement frankly and mercilessly from the broader feminist standpoint has shown any intention of making the effort. I can sympathise fully with this reluctance, for I have not overcome it easily. No one desires to be suddenly cast down from a seat so raised as to bear a close resemblance to a pedestal, and having been cast down, to be condemned as a traitor and a criminal. All suffragists are aware that to those in the

militant ranks there can be imagined no worse crime than this I am now committing—to go over to the anti-suffragists would be a venial offence by comparison. So strong is this feeling that I believe that I shall write in vain for seven out of every ten of the women with whom I have worked during the last six or seven years. Two forces will make it impossible for the majority of them to meet my attack in a fair spirit: in the first place there has been no serious public criticism until now —there has been abuse, misrepresentation, party condemnation, sex prejudice in more or less violent explosion, but no serious criticism based upon a knowledge of the facts and forces; in the second place the emotional atmosphere and the strain of hurry have tended to produce an attitude of fanatical loyalty at all costs, and the resulting conspiracy of silence has introduced the strongest forces of intolerance. All outer criticism is abuse; all inner criticism is treachery. These conditions will suffice to close the doors against my appeal for a hearing and to cast what I write into the flames. The yellow Press will

aid this end by confusing the issues and striving according to its usual policy to bring the whole matter down to the level of a petty personal squabble. The militant women having had no experience of meeting criticism but with angry repudiation or contemptuous silence will greet with hot anger or the laughter of ridicule my serious claim that militancy has failed, that it has brought overmuch evil with it into the suffrage movement. But none the less the charge must be uttered. For while its truth will not be generally acknowledged there is a minority to consider. Within the ranks there are women who are ready for better things, who have suppressed their higher aspirations and their deeper beliefs with difficulty, who are craving for release from the evils of their present condition. To these women I appeal. I believe that strength and spirit and capacity will die out of the woman's movement unless the clean outer air is let in upon its ways. I wish to break down the subtle barriers which have been raised between women and their spiritual and mental freedom by the emotionalism and

dominance of the militant directorate. I wish to see reason substituted for hurry, growth for eruption, cool courage for hot frenzy.

In setting out to seek these things I intend to show little mercy, and I ask for none. I stand prepared for expulsion from among those who are merely suffragists, for condemnation varying in degree from mild to vindictive, from the great majority of women in the movement. But I believe that the women who are out to fight for fundamental things—some of whom I hope still to number among my friends—whatever their first feelings may be, will finally recognise with me that the ultimate emancipation of women cannot be achieved upon present lines.

I do not willingly make this book a personal document, and it shall be as impersonal as it is in my power to make it under the circumstances which obtain. This preliminary word I must speak; and I must show clearly what were the forces of reason and feeling which drew me into the militant suffrage movement, kept me a willing and earnest worker within its ranks, and made me accept

official position and responsibility for five years; I must also show from what events came the growth of that slow disillusionment which gave me my personal freedom again and a shrine full of broken idols, and which has determined my present action. Unless I make these things clear, the purpose and value of what I write will be seriously endangered. My personal experience and effort alone entitle me to speak with any authority, and I can only say all that is necessary to be said by dealing frankly and personally with the things that I know. I have to strive to interpret them to others who have not had my opportunities; I have to show them as I think they are; I have to be the glass through which others may see them. And if my readers are to reach a fair judgment and to know what weight to give to my opinions and my deductions, they must have some material from which to ascertain my personal equation, temperament, and convictions, for only with the aid of this knowledge can they strike a just balance of decision upon the matter with which I deal.

But while I recognise that I must make this criticism a personal document and speak out frankly and clearly, I do not intend to devote any space to the personal relations between myself and other suffragist leaders. Some of them are totally unknown to me except as they are known to the public, some of them are personally very dear to me, close and valued friends, some of them I marvel at and condemn unceasingly; but towards none of them do I cherish ill-will, and none of them do I despise. I can honestly subscribe to much of the admiration that is daily meted out to them. I have probably seen more of the finer and more intimate of their virtues than the ordinary suffragist who is their unending adorer. But I shall judge of them by the work they have done, by the forces and influences they have employed, by the effects they have produced in the movement of woman's revolt. I write from the inside, and I intend to write what I believe is the truth. I intend to speak strongly, to shoulder my own burden of responsibility, and to make clear the responsibility of others.

This task would be very much easier if an ordinary system of management prevailed in the larger militant society. One of the difficulties in the way of frank criticism is created by the personal government which obtains in the Women's Social and Political Union, and which makes it impossible for the critic to avoid the introduction of individual names. But this condition can supply no excuse for silence. Those who claim in person the power of leadership and the credit of success cannot expect exemption from criticism and responsibility. The names of Mrs. Pankhurst, Miss Pankhurst and Mrs. Pethick Lawrence recur again and again in every panegyric and favourable review of militancy. Their names cannot be excluded from a serious criticism of the movement. And I shall not shrink from the task to which I have committed myself because the enemy and the uninitiated will allow themselves the privilege of misrepresenting what I write.

The need for speech is much too great for any of these considerations to affect my

decision, and those who wish to understand, those who are willing to give their ears, will not fail to recognise that only an earnest conviction of the need for speech would have brought me among the shoals and pitfalls with which the way of the critic of this movement is set.

I do not want to give the impression that I deny the good forces in the militant movement and refuse to acknowledge its achievements. I do not. I have no desire to belittle the work to which I have devoted five years of my life. I know what we have done, as one who has been in the movement from before the beginning must know. I see evidences of our work on every side: I mark them in the faces of the women I meet, in the voices of the men, and in a hundred little recurring experiences of every-day life. I have seen the wonderful awakening which the movement brought with it, the stimulation of courage and co-operation which it may count among its effects. I have clung as long as I could to the militant movement because of the great promise of its beginning and

because I have cherished almost to the end the belief that the evils could be rooted out and the weaknesses overcome.

But the movement has not realised its promise. The emancipation-in-a-hurry spirit has eaten up the spirit of emancipation. Daring to advertise in an unconventional way the movement has dared nothing more. It has cut down its demand from one of sex equality to one of votes on a limited basis. It has suppressed free speech on fundamental issues. It has gradually edged the working-class element out of the ranks. It has become socially exclusive, punctiliously correct, gracefully fashionable, ultra-respectable, and narrowly religious. It pays for its one breach of decorum with additional circumspection in all other directions. "I do interrupt meetings, but I am a perfect lady," expresses the present poverty of spirit. "I knocked off a policeman's helmet, but I only want a little thing, a quite respectable little thing—a vote." This is banal. One loathes to hear it. One loathes to write it. But it is true.

I know that the outward and visible effects of the militant campaign have been such as to impress the man in the street, the ordinary Pressman in search of racy "copy" and the politician who deceives himself and the multitude by playing a similar game. I know that it has impressed and enchained man and woman of better calibre. The money results have been great; the list of names and titles is impressive; the energy and alertness shown is not to be equalled in the political world; there are great meetings, great demonstrations, and much sacrifice and enthusiasm. In its own way the movement has become as effective in its methods of revivalism, advertisement, and management as the Salvation Army, to which it bears more than a superficial resemblance. Nothing done is allowed to go unchronicled; there is constant Press notice and much personal advertisement; everything is big in a spectacular, noisy way. The public, the Press, and even the politicians say that the vote is nearly won, that some hastening of the first suffrage measure has been achieved. This little

feather of success the movement can wear in its cap, unless now when it should wear it proudly through the days of truce it chooses to throw it into the dust.

I admit this gladly, even while reminding my sister suffragists that emancipation is not wholly a matter of politics and votes, and that as subtle slaveries can be imposed upon woman by over-zeal as have been imposed by prejudice. For plainly as I see what has been done, I see as plainly what we have failed to achieve, and I can compare the achievement with our original hopes and intentions. I see how far we are fallen, how far we have sold and debased ourselves, how far the legitimate urgency of the rebel has been transformed into the politician's greed for early and personal victory. And seeing these things, I cannot do otherwise than point them out to others, asking them to pause in the headlong rush, to take a new grip of the problems of woman's liberty, and to seek a wider and straighter way to the goal.

CHAPTER II

THE GENESIS OF THE MOVEMENT

Rebellion is the necessary result of injustice. It may not always achieve its purpose, or be intended to do so, but a conviction of injustice endured must precede articulate rebellion. Nor is it always certain that injustice will be followed by rebellion—it would be very much better for the world if such were the case. But where the victims of aggression or custom are ignorant and disunited the opportunities for reasoned and effective revolt are practically reduced to nothing. For many centuries women must have been rebels, but they have had to rebel singly and instinctively and under the spur of sudden feeling. Their discontent and unrest has been inarticulate and undetermined in direction. The rebels

in spirit have not known why they desired to rebel; they have struck out blindly and stupidly and unscientifically, like children harried to sudden defiance, and they have rued their outbreaks as bitterly.

But with the coming of educational opportunities these things were changed. The education of women during the latter half of the nineteenth century diffused at once the knowledge and the independence of spirit that are required to turn resentment against arbitrary sex discrimination into organised rebellion. A struggle for equality of opportunity, for a higher social status, for wider personal liberty, for admission to public life, accompanied the educational advance; and the partial success of these demands, while satisfying the older and more conservative women, only whetted the appetite of the younger. What had been an unjust restriction to their mothers and grandmothers became an unjustifiable tyranny to them; what had been recognised as a slow advance became a burdensome succession of delays. The younger women, who had enjoyed the wider educa-

tional facilities, were at once more eager, more capable, and more rebellious.

For these feelings of revolt there was little outlet in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Women whose work was chiefly confined to private and domestic channels were honeycombed with unrest, vague, spasmodic, and entirely unorganised. Women who had proved their powers in science, art and letters were incapable of tamely submitting to the archaic survivals of a condition of subjection in social and political life, but they scattered their energies over a hundred separate issues and accepted no central principle as interpreter or guide. The spirit was willing; but there seemed no way of action clearly defined. Into some avenues of effort only the bravest dare descend, and when meetings and other means of propaganda were of the rarest it was only very slowly that recruits could be won to take the plunge. For women who were interested in political affairs and for those who devoted themselves to the betterment of social and industrial conditions—an eager army—the need for

change found an easier and more practical expression. The burden of political impotence which resulted from the surviving disabilities imposed upon them by law turned their attention chiefly to the winning of the Parliamentary vote. They believed that the want of political power barred and bolted against them the avenue of reform by legislation. They resented the constraint which forced them to stand helpless in the midst of evils they desired to remedy. The trend of legislation towards industrial affairs and its interference with the woman worker inadequately organised, unable to express herself, and exploited and neglected by the men of her own class, set the current of desire flowing more strongly in the same direction. The men's Labour Representation movement aroused further feelings of rebellion; it showed that the working man had come to regard not only the possession of the vote, but the organisation of its use, as necessary for his own protection; and the woman's need for political power stood out the more glaringly by contrast.

All these varied causes contributed to the strength and direction of the rebellion which found expression in the first militant outbreak in 1905. The outbreak came at a time when women were seeking eagerly for some vigorous mode of expression for their discontent, and when outside the woman's movement there was a concentration of general attention upon politics. Without these external forces the woman's rebellion could not have been so easily restricted to the political channel at the beginning of the phase of militancy. But the looming large of politics in the industrial and social worlds, the extension of political activities into areas previously untouched, gave an extraordinary impetus to the purely political aspects of sex disability. Like so many other movements organised for the extension of liberty, the woman's movement was drawn into the whirl. More and more women came to realise the great possibilities of electoral power and to magnify, as was the contemporary habit, the dignity and value of the suffrage. Above other disabilities, that which debarred them

from citizenship assumed paramount importance until all the various resentments and grievances which operated in the minds of women were able to be concentrated upon the removal of the barrier which excluded them from the right of voting.

The treatment of suffrage motions and measures in the House of Commons has always served as valid excuse for resentment, and when under the new conditions it could be contrasted with the access of respect accorded to legislation demanded by the working classes it became a source of much bitter feeling. It began to be urged that women deserved contempt so long as they tamely submitted to it, and there was talk of deeds which could not be treated contemptuously. Men seeking the right of voting had had to employ rebellion as a final manifestation of their determination to have political power, and this began to loom before us as an imminent development. For years it was commonly admitted among suffragist enthusiasts that the women's agitation, like all other agitations for liberty, would have to end in

violence. This feeling was not confined to Manchester, where the first militant action took place; there was the same strong passion at work in many units all over the country.

The growing urgency of the demand for the franchise was expressed for some considerable time in futile attempts to move existing organisations to immediate and effective action, and every occasion of failure in this work generated stronger discontent. Efforts were made to stir up the older suffrage society; but it had long been without energy or new ideas, was kept alive by the faith of a few leaders and force of habit, and was easily immune to the awakening that was attempted within its ranks. The organisations of party women, which had contained a large proportion of suffragists in their early days, were now composed almost entirely of women who worked in their party in the interests of some male relative or under such relative's influence. It was impossible to win them to sudden revolt. The attempts to permeate certain industrial organisations met with the same ill-success. Along this line it was

clearly seen that there was no possibility of rapid progress.

When in 1903 I met Mrs. Pankhurst and became a member of the recently formed Women's Social and Political Union activity was still mainly directed towards the permeation of other organisations. Membership of the Union was then and for some time after practically confined to women who belonged to the Labour movement, and our ostensible object was to work through the various Labour societies to secure that the new Parliamentary party, then in process of formation, should be sound on questions affecting women and active in securing their early enfranchisement. During the whole of 1904 and 1905 this task kept us busily employed. We secured invitations to address meetings of every type that the Labour movement comprised—meetings of Independent Labour Party branches, of Trade Unions, Trade Councils, Ethical Societies, Labour Churches, Clarion Clubs, and other groups. On every occasion we urged the immediate need for votes for women, and appealed for

such practical support as would help us to carry the woman's suffrage resolution at Labour conferences and party meetings. To this work we added the addressing of outdoor meetings, chiefly in or near Lancashire, and we employed our position as members of the different Labour and Socialist societies to keep the suffrage issue persistently before all the branches we could reach. The greatest part of our effort was concentrated upon the Independent Labour Party, to which the members of the Pankhurst family had long belonged, and in which Mrs. Pankhurst at this time occupied an official position as member of the National Administrative Council.

But as the General Election approached our work became depressingly difficult. All effort and attention within the Labour ranks were concentrated upon the using of the votes already in the possession of men, and the necessity for the winning of votes for women was deliberately ignored. To the Labour leaders this issue offered to complicate seriously the lines of their appeal to the electorate,

and with one or two exceptions they manifested an unfriendly spirit. The rank and file workers, even when of a favourable disposition, became careless and indifferent during the excitement of preparing for electoral contests. To make our struggle the more difficult, we had to fight the adult suffrage demand, to which most of us were not in principle opposed, but which was obviously raised to postpone our equality measure. Such experiences bred suspicion and unrest in our minds, and from these feelings there finally resulted a declaration of independence on our part, though it was still some considerable time before this was fully admitted or fully achieved. But there was another result which followed directly from our loss of faith in the new parliamentary candidates, who proclaimed themselves as the new leaven of the political world. They were our last hope; and we had found them wanting. From the older political parties, tried by their record of forty years of suffragist effort, we had no hope of any success other than that which could be won by protest and

pressure. When the Labour Party failed us, when we were thrown back upon ourselves, when we found ourselves re-committed to such methods of work and agitation as were possible to a voteless sex, methods which had already been proved ineffectual by forty years of futile agitation, militancy became inevitable. The only problems were when and how it should be supplied.

The militant suffrage revolt drew its strength from many varied causes, of which only a few were political. The great human rebellion of woman against subjection was thrust into a political avenue; but as its spirit sprung from roots deeper than the political, so its purpose aimed at things beyond. To those who read history with more than the cursory attention of schoolboys and politicians it is clear that there has never been a franchise agitation which has attained any success in which the spirit of revolt has not been called forth by ultra-political wrongs. The vote has few of the characteristics or associations which stir the mob to uprising; our political system does not tend to the ennobling of the

voter; alone the right to vote could not inspire more than a few to deeds of defiance and disorder. This was the position in the woman's movement. The women who from the beginning grasped the wonderful potentialities of the militant policy were not merely suffragists seeking the right to cast their votes at a parliamentary election, they were feminists athirst for complete sex-equality, women who were out for fundamental things. The vote had for them two values: it was one of the means to the greater end; and it would create indirectly a higher appreciation of women and an atmosphere more favourable to their freedom and development.

The world stood shocked and dismayed before the first outbreaks; but the feminist rebels rallied to them and dreamed high dreams of them, and heard in them the call to a work of great liberation. To the mob mind woman, being woman, is ever required to seek even her soul's salvation decorously, and it was a thing of shame that she should cast off her immemorial chains of correct behaviour for any right on the face of the earth

or any star out of the heavens. The feminists found in this abandonment of the worship of propriety the great cause of rejoicing. Militancy interpreted itself to them not as the mere expression of an urgent desire for political rights, but as an aggresive proclamation of a deeper right—the right of insurrection. It was woman crying to the masculine sovereignty: "You do not only deny me the right of self-government, you deny me the right of rebellion against bondage, against the worst servitudes, against every manifestation of your control. This first right I take. I disavow your authority. I put aside your cobweb conventions of law and government. I rebel. I claim my inalienable right to cast off servitude. I emancipate myself. And the liberty that I have claimed and taken you shall register in the writings of your law."

I stood with these women, attracted by the fact of rebellion and viewing with initial disfavour the narrowing down of the woman's demand to the parliamentary vote. But we were led to accept it as being but a preliminary concentration against the most important of

the political disabilities. From this point of view it did not appear to matter vitally whether the first assertion of right took place in the political or some other department. The initial demand was not the whole, and we believed that all the way to the first victory would be paved with words and deeds which would undermine the servitude of women in all other human relations. It was the revolution for which we gathered. We were suffragists as a matter of course, as all who believe in the greater sex-equality must be; but we knew that our revolt itself was of very much greater value than the vote we demanded. Women might have the one and still be slaves; to share in the other they would have to free themselves from at least some of their shackles and come nearer to personal emancipation.

There were other women attracted by our initial protests, women who were mere suffragists, women who had worked long and vainly for the parliamentary vote, but whose further desires were confined to a few narrow legislative enactments. These

women were driven rather than attracted into the new movement. They came trembling at their own daring, and fearful of the methods which had opened new doors of hope to them. They came because the hopelessness of their old outlook drove them to accept any means of hastening the pace. Everything else had been tried; everything else had failed. They realised that the vote itself would never awaken and enchain women in great numbers, and the absence of numbers was threatening worse neglects and delays; they realised that suffragist effort has so far been conducted upon a plane ethically too high to reach the politician and socially too high to reach the people. The suffrage movement had been a ladies' movement, restricted almost entirely to the middle and upper classes, conventional, and punctiliously observant of a high and narrow code of honour. The new movement promised to cast away these chains. Where the feminist saw in its initiators the high courage needed to turn the malcontent into the rebel, the suffragist saw the political capacity required to turn the lady into the

politician. The one hailed militancy as a evolution, and has reaped disappointment; he other accepted it under constraint and ccepted it fearfully, and has found it harmless.

CHAPTER III

THE CHOSEN GATEWAY

THERE is a popular notion that all revolution is spontaneous, that it is impossible to decide either the time or the direction of any rising, and that, as in so many human affairs, we must be content with the moment and the avenue of revolt afforded us by the gods. But this is not strictly true. Where great warrant for discontent exists and the discontent is conscious and acknowledged, any sudden happening may precipitate a revolt. But in most cases it is only to the mob that the choice of avenue is denied. Nine out of every ten rebellions are determined in their initial aspects by the preliminary deliberations of their leaders; and it was so with the militant

suffrage movement. The first imprisonment was deliberately determined upon, pre-arranged. It was planned to take place in a particular way and at a particular time; the method, the direction, and the ostensible excuse of action, the atmosphere and the basis—all these were decided upon. Like every other body of rebels, the militant suffragists had the choice of their own gateway to liberty.

Such choice always lies between the big human way, the way of the revolutionist, and the little political way. The latter was the choice of the suffragists. They chose the small deed, and boomed it to make it big. There has been some justification for the gibes of the enemy about "a policy of pin-pricks," for self-imposed narrow limits have marked the movement from the beginning. The forces of the revolt are big, but they have been confined in a straight channel and have been degraded by a doubtful and partisan use.

The first militant protest was decided upon by Miss Pankhurst, and announced by

mother or daughter to a small number of the more active members of the Union. The body of members knew nothing of the plans until they heard with the public that it had been carried out. No resolution, general or particular, concerning militant action had ever been submitted to them. The Union had devoted some time and attention to bringing the women's suffrage demand before any prominent politicians who visited Manchester, and had generally received anything but satisfactory replies from them. It was decided to hinge the protest upon this practice, and to carry out in the Free Trade Hall meeting of October 13th, 1905, a persistent questioning of Sir Edward Grey calculated to end in forcible ejection from the meeting, arrest, and imprisonment. This line of action was admittedly narrow and partisan, but it was urged in justification that it was necessary to fix from the outset the responsibility of those who were about to become the Government of the country, and that no broadly human line of revolt would have so easily served this end. Similar vindication was advanced

against objections to the doubtful morality of making the Liberals the scapegoats for an imprisonment which we had pre-determined and set out to make inevitable.

It was at this point that the sense of difference of outlook, of which I had always been conscious in my association with Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter, became acute. I did not approve the line of protest determined upon. It seemed to me to provide a very inadequate outlet for the expression of our rebellion. It was reckless, small, and unfair. I did not even believe that it would prove effectual in achieving the immediate object. To my initial dislike of the course suggested was added the fear that the effort would be extinguished in laughter tempered with that pose of benevolent chivalry which rebel women feel is often the worst insult. I did not believe that it was possible to bluff the British Government. I approved rather a policy of doing something so big that it could not be minimised into insignificance, while at the same time I sought for lines of protest that should be capable of steady evolution

from stage to stage until a grand climax was reached. For these reasons, and because I did not consider myself a free agent, I refrained from participation in the protest. I refrained reluctantly and against my own feeling, but I could not undertake important action of such a nature without faith in myself and the deed that was to be done.

The plan was carried through. The authorities were bluffed. They allowed themselves to be made use of; they took the little thing and made it sound big. The Government allowed itself to be made use of with a Simple Simon air that was very diverting. I was proved wrong in this point of judgment. I arrived at the Free Trade Hall from a meeting I had addressed in another part of the city just in time to see the two questioners arrested, and all my conscientious objections went down before the flood of mixed feelings which the sight aroused. The thing achieved swept everything else before it, the challenge loomed larger than the manner of its utterance, the great fact that showed in the amazement of the following crowd clamouring for

information was that the woman's revolt had been made vocal, that the insurrection had commenced. Outside the police station in which the women were detained I addressed the crowd in protest, and while Miss Pankhurst and Miss Kenney lay in Strangeways Gaol I took up the work of explanation and justification in the Press and on public platforms, and I shared the responsibility of organising the series of meetings addressed by the prisoners upon their release.

This first protest was conceived in the same spirit that is found manifesting itself in ordinary party warfare; it was planned to hit the enemy and to make a good political beginning for the new movement; it was on the level of the ordinary double-dealing party move. I was on the level of the ordinary party apologist in my defence of it.

I do not offer any apology for this public vindication of particular lines of protest to which I could not give convinced personal support. I had to compromise. I could not reject the revolt, I had to accept it because of all that it implied, and accepting it, it was

impossible for me to criticise the details of its first application. While these details of the protest were obnoxious to me the rebellion itself gave me great joy. Between them I made the only choice I could. It did not occur to me at that time that these methods indicated a settled and permanent policy and would determine the tone and direction of all our future work. The channel of revolt did not seem essential; the revolt itself did. I did not realise until long afterwards that the first protest had not only been the beginning of the revolt but also the inauguration of a policy; that the little way of action was always to be preferred to the big way. The phrases of revolution have been employed, but in their employment they have been rendered ridiculous by exaggeration and incongruity. They have been used as bustling business men use "attractive lines"—catch-women phrases instead of catch-penny advertisements—and as the politicians use their election red herrings. Such militancy is not revolution—it is the exploitation of revolution.

I am announcing no new discovery, I have made no new discovery. In the early days that succeeded the first protest many women felt these things dimly or fearfully. But they chose to be silent, blinded by admiration in the face of action and loyalty in the face of abuse. I believe some of them see with me now that we did wrong to suppress our doubts. The conviction of the need for rebellion warred all the time in us with the conviction that this was not the right method of rebellion, but since this way was launched and launched by those who had no doubts, it seemed best to be silent. Perhaps the history of the militant movement might have been very different if at this early stage we had insisted upon full discussion of a militant programme, so far as general lines of action and the principles to be observed were concerned.

The General Election of 1906 followed close upon this militant beginning, and it was characterised by a continuance of the questioning campaign, which did not, however, again lead to imprisonment. It was felt that a

sufficient beginning had been made, and our numbers being all too few for the work in hand, no further imprisonments were arranged for this period. At the early meetings the questions were asked at the usual question time, but this policy was soon abandoned. I cannot fix the date more exactly than by my own experiences. In December Miss Kenney and I were responsible for interrupting Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman at the Albert Hall, and in the same month there were interruptions at a Glasgow meeting and at one in Liverpool. Thereafter the interruption policy was regularly followed. There were divided counsels upon this point as upon that of the first imprisonment, but all objections were swept aside. It was necessary to keep the revolt in evidence; there were but few workers, and funds were almost wanting, and the anxiety and strain involved in these conditions left little time or energy for the deliberation of any question of methods. We were absorbed in keeping things going; we did the thing that was first put forward; we kept up a day-to-day struggle, a sort of hand-

to-mouth fight. It was not until the Election was over that the differences of opinion as to our attacks upon Ministerial meetings became evident.

Gradually thereafter three schools of thought expressed themselves upon this matter: the one claimed that all bodies of discontented men interrupted speakers, and that women should take the same liberty; the second declared for questions at question time, urging the sacrifice of some part of the dramatic effect in order to gain the sympathy of the audience; and the third school advocated the complete holding up of Ministerial speakers until a Government pledge was forthcoming. The first policy may be called the policy of advertisement; the second the policy of practical and political expediency; and the third the policy of revolution. The course of action which recommended itself to me was that we should follow the second policy until we were strong, with the third in reserve, if necessary, for a final defiance. But the first course has been the one applied; and it has achieved no more than could have

been achieved by the second, while it has entailed all the drawbacks and payments and losses of the third.

Attempts have been made to justify it by the statement that questions asked at question time have been ignored by chairmen and speakers, and that Ministers have sometimes deliberately left the platform before the questions could be asked. But it would surely always be better to let such an evasion occur, and then to make a protest which would appeal to the audience assembled, than to assume that it will happen and lose the audience by interruption. If the questions interpolated in the Ministerial speeches brought any replies the case for interruption would be arguable, but they only achieve publicity, and that a later protest could be made to secure in equal measure and under better conditions. The one thing that interrupture provides for, and that the questioning policy fails to supply, is the irritation and annoyance of the speaker—a policy much believed in by the Social and Political Union—and of which the results have so far only

been reckoned on one side and greatly magnified.

But the questioning policy offers greater opportunities of real personal pressure. A persistent and skilful application of the policy would finally have secured a hearing, and a series of carefully drafted questions would have sufficed to drive the Minister into a corner and to estrange from him the sympathies of some members of the audience. The doors of meetings would not have been shut against women, and when an occasion arose which justified the complete destruction of a meeting by the holding up of a Ministerial speaker it would have been possible to apply this policy. If we had respected the rights of the audience during our general campaign we should have found it possible to rely upon some measure of support from the public when such a time of crisis arrived. Whatever hopes may have been cherished of it, the use of the weapon of interruption has only resulted in weakening the militant movement; it has estranged thousands of possible sympathisers; it has kept

many women who were both suffragists and Liberals out of the fighting ranks and has prevented the awakening of many more; it has promoted the growth of a passionate irritation among Liberal men, and this has led, in the case of stewards of meetings, to retaliation and brutality; it has tended to reduce the effectiveness of the anti-Government Election policy; and most important of all, it has protected Cabinet Ministers from the worst exposure and has created for them a feeling of sympathy which has confirmed them in their evil ways.

Perhaps the worst possible example of the folly of this practice was that provided by the interruption of Mr. Lloyd George when he addressed the meeting of the Women's Liberal Federation in the Albert Hall. This was an occasion on which every possible preliminary provision had been made for the answering of questions, and where the turning of the vast audience of women against the militant movement was an obvious act of madness. If the interruption policy had been justified on every other occasion, it should

have been suspended upon this. No excuse can avail in defence of its application.

But I want it to be understood that I do not condemn the interruption of meetings because I think it an evil policy in itself, a course that is not justified. I am fully convinced that when the political and social interests of any class have been abused as those of women have been that class is morally justified in any act of rebellion which it has the power to perform. But I am also convinced that only a minority of rebels are capable of distinguishing between their desire for retaliation and their desire for reform. The moral justification of every possible means of revolt must not be interpreted to mean that free rein can be rightly given to the desire to strike back. The policy of striking back if it comes to be preferred to the policy of striking to win spells suicide. Many methods of revolt to which the position of outlawry in which women find themselves gives sanction would, if applied, seriously endanger the prospects of reform, and tend to increase rather than remove the disabilities

of women. To apply these methods is to prove that the longing for retaliation is stronger than the judgment, stronger than the desire for reform, and of this error the Social and Political Union has been persistently guilty. I do not desire to escape my personal responsibility in this matter: I have interrupted some half a dozen meetings, all in the early days of the struggle; but I have questioned at perhaps a score, and I have thus realised the possibilities of both policies. For the last three years the society with which I have worked, the Freedom League, of whose militant policy I have been officially in charge, has followed exclusively the questioning course, with one exception, though the opportunities for its development have been seriously reduced by the interruption policy carried on by Mrs. Pankhurst's society.

I could forgive this interruption policy, with all its blocking of a better way, if it really achieved anything. But it was never really effective, and now it is become a ghastly failure. The temporary irritation and excitement caused by the "usual voice from the

roof " crying " Votes for Women!" followed by the scuffle among the rafters, does not even spoil the speaker's temper, while it leaves the audience perfectly comfortable and only a little more convinced of the partisan spitefulness of the organisation responsible for the intervention.

CHAPTER IV

AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT

THE militant movement began only after the older suffrage society had failed to win for itself any political standing and had shown a complete incapacity to change its tactics with the changes of condition brought by time. Chief among its weaknesses were its failure to realise the necessity for pressure and the diffusion of its political effort along lines that were vague and antiquated. It took no notice of the change that had come over the position of the private Member of the Commons, and continued to devote much of its attention to winning pledges of support, although a sufficient majority of pledged members had been in existence for quite twenty years and their inability to carry a

Suffrage Bill proved that the problem had shifted to that of providing an adequate opportunity for voting; it failed to realise that the old practice of petitioning was played out; it continued to keep its advocacy in the academic and drawing-room stage, although the great forces of politics had passed to the street corner and the industrial world. The suffrage movement stood in great need of the revivification which militancy brought with it, a change of policy had been long overdue, and nowhere was the need more strongly shown than in the sphere of its parliamentary direction.

During the half-century of suffrage effort a great change has come over the parliamentary world. Under the influence of party considerations and the pressure of public business the Commoner has been steadily reduced in dignity and limited in opportunity, while the Ministerial body has attained paramount importance. This change had passed unmarked by the suffragists of the old school, and the Cabinet, while exerting almost sovereign power, and demonstrating its direct

responsibility by the blocking of several suffrage Bills, was allowed to escape all direct pressure. This error the militants set out to remedy, and our political policy shaped itself upon quite other lines. Where the old suffragists had been content with a policy of appeal, the new developed as aggressive a plan as the circumstances permitted—a policy of antagonism to the Government in power.

This anti-Government course was first fully stated at the Cockermouth By-election in July, 1906, in which Miss Pankhurst, Mrs. Coates Hansen, and I toured the constituency against the Government. The policy had shaped itself upon the recognition of the predominance of the Government in power at any given time, upon the need for a central point on which to focus attack, and upon the example of the policy of Parnell. We claimed that under any system of political control the Government in possession of power is ultimately responsible for the condition of the people, and therefore for the votelessness of women, while under the British system at the present time the responsibility is direct and

immediate. From this we deduced that we were logically committed to opposition to the Government in power until we were enfranchised, and at the same time our personal and political independence forbade us to support any party. In theory there is no contradiction between the two positions, but the attempt to define a line of action in accordance with both discovered an array of difficulties. A clear way was cut through the tangle by the decision that we should appeal to electors to refrain from supporting the Government nominee, leaving to themselves the further problem as to the use or non-use of the vote.

But the line of demarcation which we defined for ourselves between the necessary opposition to the Government and the undesirable support of some other party has long ceased to be observed. The "Do not vote for the Government nominee" has been translated by force of circumstances into "Vote against the Government," and our original rigid independence has been thereby undermined. The basis of the anti-Government policy is sound; but the machinery of

politics and the defective education of the electorate in this country combine to make a negative attitude and absolutely independent action almost impossible. As a result in election contests the anti-Government suffrage forces, however unwilling, cannot escape the position of unofficial assistants of the opposition candidate or candidates. This must be frankly admitted. Furthermore, the policy when confined wholly to opposition to Government nominees is prone to lead to the entire neglect of the individual Member's convictions and his powers within the House. But after giving due weight to both these limitations I believe that the anti-Government policy must be admitted to be the best possible policy for by-elections, as soundly based in theory and as perfect in practice as circumstances allow. But as with every political policy, there are strict limits to its value, and its development into an anti-late-Government policy for use at General Elections is neither wise nor sound. Against this development I used all my powers of argument and analysis in the Freedom League,

and I succeeded only in delaying the adoption of the policy from January to December of last year. The phrases of the by-election fights have become as shibboleths to the women in both militant societies, and to question the application of the same policy at a General Election is to be suspected of party leanings and cowardice.

Quite early in the struggle it was recognised that the coming of a General Election would be a test of our political independence. When angry Liberals interjected at our meetings queries about "Tory gold" we always referred them to the General Election, either airily, as those who had complete security in the sense of their own honesty, or with weighty asservation, that the seriousness of our political independence might be understood by the members of the audience, to whom we promised a triumphant demonstration when the appeal to the country finally came. I know that these statements were made in all good faith by the women with whom I was most in touch during the early days of the struggle, for we realised from the

beginning of our application of the anti-Government policy that it would be put to the test, and that our statesmanship would be tested along with it, when the existing Government came to an end. The problem of what we were then to do to secure the best results for the Suffrage Cause had deeply concerned us.

The General Election situation is essentially different from that which obtains when any government holds the reins of office, and this difference is not seriously affected whether the election is the result of a dissolution or of a resignation. In either case both parties are competitors for power; both parties are possible governments; both parties are to be considered as defining the attitude that will be observed in office. Under these circumstances any attitude of antagonism specially directed against either of the competitors is an anti-party attitude, for there is no effective government in control to be attacked. The electors are holding the balance between two possible governments; this position is the essence of a general election. An anti-party attitude on

the part of suffragists cannot be justified except by reasons conclusive enough to override the most serious of permanent considerations, those of independence and the advantage to the Suffrage Cause. A weighty public pledge given under such circumstances as to render it fully satisfactory, or a definite antagonistic proclamation which makes it necessary to defeat one of the two parties at all hazards, would warrant the strongest pro-party or anti-party campaign. But nothing less than public declaration accompanied by guarantees or as clear and unequivocal an announcement of opposition could justify a party attitude.

In January of last year neither of these conditions prevailed, and tactics of a non-partisan character were absolutely essential. Yet when the General Election came, the Women's Social and Political Union concentrated its opposition against the Liberal Party, attacking the Liberal nominee in those seats in which the majority was small. This action gave immediate and sufficient sanction to the charge of anti-Liberal bias. It is

impossible for anyone but the leaders concerned to say whether such an attitude has always been intended or whether the strong feelings engendered during the five years' struggle were responsible for the abandonment of the old independent position. The Freedom League decided upon the policy of attacking those anti-suffragist enemies who were prominent members of either party, ex-Ministers, or men in the circle from which Cabinet Ministers are chosen. This policy we justified by the argument that when the anti-government policy was impossible suffragists should concentrate upon enemies among the men who form governments, either keeping them out or bringing pressure to bear upon them in the direction of conversion. As the result of such a policy the prospects of suffrage legislation would be improved whatever government happened to be returned by the electors.

But this attitude on the part of the Freedom League was not of long standing, and at the December election the two militant societies followed the extraordinary course of applying

anti-Liberal tactics, although the Liberal Ministry had just given the only serious woman suffrage pledge that has ever been drawn from any party or government. It is quite true that the pledge was a pre-election one and therefore to be suspiciously regarded; it is also true that it left open ways of evasion and delay. Was there ever a political pledge that did not? But it stood to the credit of the Liberal Cabinet as the best pledge ever given, was accepted by leading Conservative papers as a final commitment, and was enhanced in value by the utterances of several individual Cabinet Ministers who publicly advocated an early settlement. The full folly of this antagonistic attitude can only be realised when it is remembered that the Conservative Party went to the country in stony silence upon this issue, entirely and completely unpledged, and with prominent anti-suffragists among those who would be in the Ministerial circle should they be returned to power. Opposition to the Liberals under these circumstances was not only partisan, it was suicidal. Had the suffragist efforts

been of sufficient weight to decide the result we should have had to watch the pretty spectacle of women eager for votes turning out of power the Government that offered facilities for early suffrage legislation in order to gratify their feelings of resentment—the spectacle of the suffrage cause being sacrificed to anti-Liberal feeling. The pledge was not good enough to command support of the Liberal Party; far from it. But it was quite good enough to relieve Liberalism from differentiation and special attack.

I want to make myself quite clear about this matter. I recognise the strong grounds of feeling upon which the inclination to attack the Liberals is based. The Liberal Ministerial record contains many instances of evasion and double dealing on this suffrage question, and it is marked with deeds of unnecessary violence and unjustifiable brutality to militant women and their supporters. But while I remember this I am constrained to remember also that the Liberal Ministry were the victims of our tactics as much as we were the victims of their brutality, and that

under the existing leadership we had from the beginning chosen to take courses specially designed to provoke retaliation and bad feeling. Our attack came like a storm from a clear sky; no mental preparation for it was possible, no planning, no trimming of sails to meet the new wind. It was scarcely to be wondered at if the Government stumbled into folly, failed to realise the quality of our resistance, and struck back. It could scarcely have been otherwise at the beginning. Furthermore, I think we ought to admit that we should have got no better treatment from the Conservative Party had the attack been conducted upon the same lines. These considerations should have sufficed to combat any inclination to endanger the work for which we were organised by yielding to partisan and revengeful feeling.

Women suffragists, militant and non-militant, are out to win the parliamentary vote, not to harry the Liberal Party. Like every other possible policy the harrying of the Liberal Party must be judged on its merits; if it is a good method to use when the

Liberals happen to be the party in power, then let it be used; when it is obviously wrong in principle and inexpedient to take this course it should be abandoned. However good the anti-government horse may be it is not necessary to ride it to the devil. I quite approve of the opposition to Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. Lloyd George: they did not only deserve to be opposed, but it was sound politics to oppose them. With the chance of the return to power of a Conservative majority, however, such attack should have been balanced by opposition to anti-suffragists of that party like Mr. Austen Chamberlain and Mr. F. E. Smith. In this way considerations of policy, principle, and sentiment would have been satisfied at the same time. The Fates seemed to conspire to make the December election an unhappy one for suffragists. As if the folly of the militant suffragists were not enough, the National Union of Suffrage Societies indulged in the pastime of running Suffrage candidates, with the minimum of preparation and organisation, and under circumstances which might have

been specially designed to produce the worst possible results.

As the position now stands the militant suffragists have opposed the Liberal Party at three General Elections, and thus conclusively disposed of their claim to political independence. I do not mean to suggest that the rank and file members of the two militant societies are conscious of an anti-Liberal bias. They are not. They believe in their own asservations of party independence and would concentrate upon opposition to the Conservatives once that party was securely established in power. But they are not governed as a body by reason: in the Social and Political Union they are controlled by the arbitrary dictates of their leaders, and in the Freedom League by the force of a vicious example. This reduces the problem to that of defining the attitude of the leaders, of discovering whether the trinitarian group which controls the election policy of both societies is itself anti-Liberal in sentiment; and some little show of argument can be marshalled in support of such a contention. Dr.

Pankhurst was a Liberal and a Liberal Parliamentary candidate before he and his wife joined the Labour movement. It is known that their severance was dictated by a loss of faith in official Liberalism and disappointment with the Liberal attitude on certain issues, and that the Manchester Liberal Party showed some resentment against an action which necessarily cast reflections upon it. That the experiences of suffrage advocates within any political organisation tend to produce strong feelings of discontent and suspicion I can give personal evidence, and in all probability similar experiences had produced their effect upon the Pankhurst family.

The record of official Liberalism in the matter of woman suffrage is very black. From 1867 until the present day the reports of Parliamentary proceedings show a continuous application by Liberal leaders of all the weapons of opposition and delay, and the officials of the party outside Parliament have displayed considerable antagonistic leanings. Mr. Gladstone's record is particularly bad; whether in office or out of it he used his

voice and vote and influence against the enfranchisement of women. He killed the first Woman Suffrage Bill in 1867; he was solely responsible for keeping women out of the Reform Bill of 1884; and he displayed his antagonism against the measures of 1891 and 1892. These facts will go far to explain an anti-Liberal bias in women who have worked long and vainly in the Liberal Party, and who have seen the honest intentions of the majority of its members translated into dishonest subterfuge and opposition in official circles. But no indignation against past betrayal can be justified or extenuated when it leads to the endangering of the present and the future of the Woman Suffrage Cause. One cannot pass easily over the repeated evidence that resentment and the desire for retaliation, partisan bias and the frenzy for martyrdom, are constantly blocking the way to the very goal that suffragists are out to seek. I have every sympathy with the angry feelings, but I cannot excuse their practical expression in such a manner as to endanger suffrage legislation: and this is the result that has now been attained.

CHAPTER V

SUCCESS THAT BROUGHT DEFEAT

After the General Election of 1906 we conducted a special campaign in London for which Miss Kenney and I were made specially responsible. Our chief work consisted of organising deputations to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Asquith, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and to this we added hundreds of public meetings, the forming of branches and visiting of all men and women likely to be sympathetic with our work with whom we could get in touch. During this period we played a part at Mrs. Montefiore's siege against taxation at Hammersmith, spent a week organising a mob demonstration against Mr. Asquith at Northampton, and made flying visits to

Huddersfield, Birmingham, Manchester, Oldham, Cumberland, Staffordshire, and Suffolk. In April, during these same early days in the capital, we raised the ire of all politicians by our protest from the Gallery of the House on the occasion of the usual talking-out of the Woman's Suffrage Bill, for which protest Miss Irene Miller, Miss Kenney, and I were placed under a ban by the Speaker and forbidden admission to the House for a period of one year. In June the second arrests took place in Cavendish Square, on the occasion of a deputation to Mr. Asquith. I was first arrested, and being committed at once to Holloway, was the first of the long series of protestant suffragists to enter its gates. Miss Kenney and two other London members were arrested a little later on the same day, but they reached Holloway only after a fortnight's legal struggling with the police prosecutor. Meanwhile, my sentence of two months had been reduced to one by the Home Secretary, and a few days later I was released through the interference of a London morning paper which purchased a

cheap boom by the payment of my fine. The House having risen we turned our attention to the provinces and occupied the summer months with meetings, chiefly in the open air, in most of the large towns and cities in the North and in Scotland.

Our vigorous tactics and the second imprisonments produced everywhere interest and excitement in the public and attention from the Press. The public flocked to see and hear us, chiefly from curiosity, and often, indeed, to manifest its complete disapproval of our policy. The standard of Press comment was commonly pitched at the lowest level. Every possible device of misrepresentation was employed against us, and personal abuse and scurrility were our daily newspaper fare. Anonymous letters of the vilest description used to reach us. When we travelled about for meetings hotel keepers and landladies were loth to take us in, and on one occasion we were compelled to seek the hospitality of a kind-hearted and disapproving acquaintance in the early hours of the morning. We were faced daily with a hundred

petty indignities and insults. I do not think that any of the few women who bore the brunt of those early days will ever forget them.

But more than compensation was given to us by the adhesion of numbers of women of character and principle who recognised the spirit of emancipation, the great hunger for human progress and liberty which was seeking utterance through the channel of militancy. We knew that the channel was narrow and ill-chosen, though as yet we had scarcely dared to admit this even to ourselves, for it seemed to us that so long as it served to give outlet to the great forces of feminine revolt against injustice it was uplifted and vindicated by its purpose. This was the doctrine we preached and believed; this was the doctrine we won other women to accept. For although always from the beginning we have disliked the methods we have had to employ, disliked them as no angry Mrs. Grundy could ever dislike them, disliked them when we were most passionately applying or defending them, disliked them in spite of the bitter

provocation which gave them excuse, we have forced ourselves to believe that they were inevitable and that they were glorified by the great purpose of revolution. As well as these woman rebels we gathered about us also a great number of working women, earnest, unlettered, and poor, having nothing to give but personal service and sacrifice, and giving of these willingly. Women of progressive environment and of a higher social grade mustered more slowly under the militant standard, and more slowly still came a few women of the upper classes. With representatives of these different grades in social life around us we began to cherish great hopes of a union of women of all classes to serve the common cause; this was one more of the dreams that were to end in sudden disillusionment.

Up to October, 1906, the movement had been regarded by the Press and the public generally as a kind of hysterical hooliganism finding an outlet by variety show methods. It had been systematically written down. Its exponents had been given Press notice on the

same plane as that given to smart criminals and self-boomed variety performers. The provincial tours of the summer months had done something to prepare the way for a change, and in London the appeal of the movement to the multitude had begun to gather large weekly crowds in Hyde Park and in other such centres. But we were still an ostracised few, a band of "branded female hooligans" to the gentlemen of the Press and the public who were guided by them. The greater number of those who were curious about us were curious only as they would have been about a new comedy dancer to whose name a breath of scandal attached, or to a recent murderer who had evolved a new thrill in his methods of butchery. But in October the arrest of ten suffragettes at the House of Commons was followed by a storm of protest which entirely changed the situation. The first phase of the movement came suddenly to an end, and we who had struggled and foundered in shifting sand found ourselves on firm ground.

The Government had gone too far and its

foolish severity caused a revulsion of feeling. Among the imprisoned suffragists were women of family and position and one of great historic name, while it was obvious that three of them had been arrested without good cause. The attention and sympathy of the public were won by the publication of these facts, and attempts to secure our release came from most unexpected quarters. While we lay in Holloway we were conscious of the changed atmosphere, for we were removed from the Second to the First Division, were permitted many privileges and relaxations, and ultimately were released when our sentences were but half expired. We came out of prison to find ourselves heroes. On every side there was laudation and approval. We were invited into "respectable" social circles, the constitutional suffragists made a great banquet in our honour at the Savoy, a group of well-known writers and sociologists endorsed our claims and poured ridicule upon the Government, a prominent artist presented us with a memorial sketch of our triumphal progress towards the House of Commons;

the rebound from contempt and obloquy carried us to sudden heights of dizziness.

It is a commonplace that many people who rise to the heights in adversity and live lives of simple usefulness and dignity under ordinary conditions cannot stand the strain of success. It is the same with movements. I had set out in the militant struggle sure of the great work we should do for the ultimate emancipation of women, but doubtful to the last degree of any early acknowledgment or success. I looked forward to a pilgrimage of protest in which we should prepare the way for the women who came after us, and should see but little of the harvest ourselves. I felt that our work would not be understood or valued until, like other rebel pioneers, we had been dead a few hundred years. The parliamentary vote would, of course, be granted much earlier because of our efforts, but it would appear to the world to be granted in spite of us rather than by means of us. We must be prepared to be execrated, misrepresented, condemned, to the end. But beyond this question of immediate results we

should, by our revolt, be awakening women to see, rousing them to rebel, undermining the superstructure of servitude by sapping at the roots of woman's acquiescence in her own subjection. The sudden rehabilitation of October changed this outlook at once. It began to appear as though women and the world were riper for advance than we had dreamed. We held out our hands to the acknowledgment we had never counted upon, and felt the sudden promise of the dawn. And almost before we had uttered our thanks for the unexpected lifting of our burden we knew that it was a false promise, a mistaken acceptance, not a dawn but a mirage. We had won a new position indeed, but one full of dangers.

We were now met with unhealthy hero-worship and exaggerated devotion. New members tended to worship us rather than to understand and co-operate with us. The Press found sudden explanations for, and extenuations of, our unruly conduct. The pose of propriety was made almost inevitable by the obvious shock of surprise which showed

itself when we were beheld in the social circles that had been barred against us. "These militant suffragettes are actually ladies!" was the gasping cry; and straightway most of us became ladies again, and the rebel woman was veneered over or given hasty burial.

The chorus of approval and excuse brought out another weakness: it confirmed in us the pose of martyrdom of which we had been rather ashamed until then, and it strengthened that curious mental and moral duplicity which allowed us to engineer an outbreak and then lay the burden of its results upon the authorities. The final responsibility of the Government for women continuing unenfranchised is quite another thing from that special and detailed responsibility which had been placed upon the shoulders of the Ministry after the first protest and which had come to follow each successive one. The Government holds the key of legislation; but it is expected also to administer the laws, and those who deliberately set out to break laws, even for the good reason that they are urgent to share in making them, cannot expect

immunity. Women who are out to fight organised authority are rebels, and they should never forget the fact; they should stand frankly forth as rebels; they should confine their attacks upon the enemy to the primary cause of revolt and should not belittle their final object and descend to prevarication by making a grievance of every response to their disorder. This is a particularly pernicious course when at the same time it is frankly admitted that the movement lives and grows by its outbreaks. Under these circumstances the only course consonant with self-respect is for the rebels to admit their own responsibility for the disorder and to take the consequences.

The feeling within the Union against this double shuffle, this game of quick change from the garments of the rebel to those of the innocent martyr, was swamped by the public approval and extenuation of our protests. We were too speedily rehabilitated; we were exonerated before we had declared ourselves. We were accepted into respectable circles not as rebels but as innocent victims, and as innocent victims we were led to pose. If we had

frankly and strongly stated that we had set out to make the Government imprison us, that we had deliberately chosen just those lines of protest and disorder that would irritate those in authority into foolish retaliation, if we had told the truth, the very proper persons who became our champions would have spent many weary months and years in condemning us before they had finally realised the value and intention of our efforts.

Under these influences of rehabilitation the movement became conventionalised and narrowed and hypocritical. We were accepted for what we were not, and immediately began to live up—or down—to the standard expected of us. There came to be one speech for the council chamber and another for the platform; the propaganda of the society suffered a sudden loss of breadth; the industrial evils which had formed the basis of much of our appeal were gradually pushed aside for the consideration of technical, legal, and political grievances; the advocacy of reformed sex-relations was reduced to the vaguest generalities, and

even these were discouraged; the working-class women were dropped without hesitation and the propaganda of the organisation confined to the middle and upper classes; the "advanced" women, an eminently undesirable class in a socially superior society, were even more speedily driven out or silenced.

The new conditions brought out other weaknesses—weaknesses in principle and internal government and further weaknesses of methods—which we were loth to recognise or admit, but which became grave enough to force admission from the most unwilling during the next few months. The forces which began to show themselves did not find sudden birth at this particular time—they had been in existence from the beginning, but the early glamour of the movement had blinded us to the real nature of them. I had believed in the leaders in spite of warnings and personal experiences which ought to have shown me the true circumstances. And the undermining of my belief in the aims of the present leaders and the movement as moulded by their ideas would have been a very much

slower process had it not been for their attitude towards internal management.

The government of the society had always been very loosely carried out; there had been strong opposition to any constitution at all during the first two years, but by a sort of mutual consent members exercised voting rights over such business as was allowed to come before them. It was understood in an indefinite way that some form of democratic management would be secured to the members as soon as the size of the society made the original free and easy method impossible, but when action towards this end was suggested it was put off again and again. I had given this pledge of a constitution to the branches that I had formed in various places, and the continued delay rendered me a little restive. At last in the early summer of 1906, before I left London for a propaganda tour in Scotland, and while Mrs. and Miss Pankhurst still remained in Manchester, it was decided that the arrangements for the drafting and passing of a constitution for the society should be carried out, chiefly, I

believe, because of my attitude within the society and the friendly pressure of a Labour politician outside. October of that year was fixed for a conference of delegates, and I was instructed to return from Scotland in time to make all the preliminary arrangements for the event. A formal notice of the Conference was sent out before my departure; but by an arrangement made later my responsibility for this and other matters was handed over to Miss Pankhurst while I outstayed my term in Scotland to work up a demonstration and deputation to Mr. Asquith in East Fife. This kept me away from London until two or three days before the date for which the delegates were summoned.

I returned to find that absolutely no arrangements had been made for the Conference, that no resolutions had been asked for or received, that no skeleton draft for submission to the branches or the delegates had been prepared, and that no instructions, no rules of procedure, and no order of business had been even considered. The Conference apparently was to be turned into a meeting

for arranging a deputation to the House of Commons. I made immediate protest, which was so received as to remove my feelings of suspicion and led me to regard the neglect as due to carelessness rather than design. Then I spent a couple of hours the night before the gathering in drafting a constitution, an agenda, and a series of suggestions on policy and the conduct of business, and these, having been approved by the other officials with but slight alteration, formed the basis of our proceedings on the morrow, and of the famous Constitution. This Constitution was adopted by the delegate meeting just prior to that October protest which wrought such a change in the public estimation of our movement.

Under the new influences and in spite of the Constitution—perhaps indeed because of it—the methods of personal control which had always been employed began now to be emphasised. The real decisions of the society had rarely been made by the society, but from the formation of the London branches and Committee I had made every effort to carry

forward the business on ordinary orderly lines. But now the society came to be governed by decisions made at little private conferences in a private apartment, and these were then submitted to a farce of approval or announced as settled policy to the other officials. Quiet insistent methods were employed to get the complete control of affairs into the hands of the present trinitarian group; and the members of this group were singled out and elevated to a position of pre-eminence in a peculiarly unblushing and undesirable way. An organised effort was made to turn the whole stream of public laudation —at this time flowing about us in fulsome and lavish fashion—into one channel in order to effect the booming of these same two or three names. The arts of skilled social intrigue were employed and personal devotion was sedulously cultivated.

Alongside of these evidences of intention to confine the leadership and control of the society to a self-chosen group, there was manifested also a tendency towards the employment of the political methods of evasion,

manipulation, and exaggeration. There grew up an admitted policy of playing purely for effect, to excite the public curiosity, to fill the treasury. Tactics were adopted which seemed to indicate that militancy would be degraded to the purposes of advertisement and the movement reduced to the level of a spectacular suffrage show. Women who were taking part in the movement because of rational conviction and not as the mere slaves of feeling saw cause for fear in the excessive growth of emotion and excitement. Under the cover of this emotional condition the will of the leaders rapidly came to be substituted for the will of the members; free choice and personal liberty dwindled into insignificance; the subtle tyranny of affectional appeal showed itself as a serious danger. Women were being carried into protests and positions of danger by the misuse of their emotions; and the steady setting up of agencies of influence showed that this was becoming a deliberate plan of action.

These threatenings of danger from within brought about a sense of active unrest among women of earlier membership, and after a

period of suppression from mistaken ideas of loyalty several independent legitimate attempts were made to bring about a general consideration of these matters at the Annual Conference of October, 1907. When knowledge of these things reached headquarters in the ordinary course they were met by direct attacks upon the women supposed to be responsible. One of these women was censured by the Committee under Mrs. Pankhurst's direction without being granted a hearing or being notified that she was to be tried, and the meeting was packed with paid organisers who, rarely appearing at Committee meetings, had on this occasion been called up in force. These proceedings awakened feelings of resentment, and branches and members until that time entirely unaffected were seriously shaken, with the result that the preparations for seeking a remedy at the Conference were redoubled. But the Conference was never held. In September, about a month before the date arranged for the gathering, Mrs. Pankhurst, ignoring the Honorary Secretary, called a Committee meeting, declared the

Conference annulled, the Constitution cancelled, and the rights of the members abolished, and proclaimed herself as sole dictator of the movement. She appointed herself secretary, Mrs. Pethick Lawrence treasurer, and Miss Pankhurst organising secretary. She chose for herself a committee consisting of paid organisers and two or three women who were willing to lend their names for this purpose. This body was practically only a committee on paper, and judging from my earlier experiences it would seldom, if ever, be summoned to a regular meeting.

The malcontents rallied under this blow and showed a bold front, circulated statements to the branches affirming that the Conference could only be annulled and the Constitution abrogated by the will of the members, and summoned the delegates to attend at the place and time fixed. Fully half the original membership of the Union answered the call and declared by a series of resolutions their claim to internal suffrage in the affairs of the society, further re-affirming the doctrine of political independence and militancy as the

basis of suffrage work. For some months there were two societies in the field, both claiming to be the Women's Social and Political Union, though Mrs. Pankhurst's society added the word "National" to its title. But in January, 1908, the self-governing section changed its name, to put an end to the public confusion and the appearance of bad feeling between two groups of women working for the same end, and thenceforth called itself the Women's Freedom League.

There was no defence of Mrs. Pankhurst's *coup d'etat* issued either in the Press or to the members; the deed was excused, extenuated, admitted as technically incorrect, but justified by a regrettable necessity. By this pose the aggressors cloaked themselves in the mantles of saviours who had boldly nipped an insidious conspiracy in the bud and had saved the Union at the price of their most cherished principles, while the rebel section came to be regarded as renegades who had plotted to sell the movement to the Labour Party. This statement was repeated in the Press and upon platforms until it was really

believed by people who ought to have been better informed. The charge was challenged at once, and never substantiated, and it has now been completely disproved by the three years' political independence of the Women's Freedom League. But it did not bear the most superficial examination. Had such a conspiracy existed it would have been met in open fashion at the Conference, exposed and destroyed; and such exposure would have strengthened the position of Mrs. Pankhurst and her followers.

That the *coup d'etat* was considered necessary is an acknowledgment that open criticism and discussion could not be met. The only shadow of evidence brought forward to support the charge was that Mrs. Despard remained a member of a Labour society. In comment upon this statement it is only necessary to point out that Mrs. Pankhurst herself, for many years and until only a few months earlier, had been a prominent member of the same society, that Mrs. Pethick Lawrence was or had recently been a member, as had all the younger members of the Pankhurst

family, and that I, though preferring a free-lance position, had joined this society at Mrs. Pankhurst's request, but had resigned before she did. To these facts it must be added that a large section of the original Manchester members, who remained with the dictator when the cleavage occurred, continued to regard the Union as a branch of the Labour movement, and to speak and act accordingly for some time after that event, and indeed until a special pledge was devised to make them toe the independent line. The cry of Labour leanings was the first plausible excuse on which the autocrats could seize. It was as true and as false as such plausible excuses usually are. But it was seized upon, not because of its truth but because of its plausibility, because Mrs. Pankhurst with that quick instinct for effect and that political unscrupulousness which mark her out, knew that it was just the kind of excuse that would confuse the issue and leave the burden of justification, with its long explanations and repudiations, upon the new rebel group that had refused to submit to her authority.

But the final condemnation of the *coup d'etat* is that it was a stupid and unnecessary mistake. From every point of view it was a mistake. It was unprincipled, inconsistent, and unnecessary. It reduced the right which the movement was organised to obtain to a mere matter of expediency. If it lay in the power of a leader of a society to decide that for the good of the society its members could be deprived of self-government, the same claim must be allowed on behalf of the chief of a State. If Mr. Asquith excludes woman from the suffrage on the grounds of expediency, Mrs. Pankhurst has supplied his justification—she has done the same. From the point of view of policy also the move was bad. By denying votes to her followers Mrs. Pankhurst belittled the very function which it was her desire and intention to magnify above all other rights. Besides, the *coup d'etat* was unnecessary. The members of the Union would have willingly created an autocracy, for internal independence had already been undermined by the subtle use of personal influence. The clumsy declaration of

autocracy broke the spell for many who would willingly have voted away their rights. Numbers of those who stuck to the Constitution and formed the Freedom League were moved by resentment against the method of the attack, rather than by the attack, upon their independence. This reversion to autocracy, this denial of suffrage in their own society to women seeking suffrage in the State, with the methods by which it was attained, brought to a sudden close the second chapter of the progress of militancy. Our great hopes in the movement, the very foundations of our belief in it, had been undermined. But we refused to realise this, and entered into a futile struggle to make the militant movement what it ought to have been—a movement of reasoned revolt, aggressive, and, however small in numbers, large in methods, working with clean hands, and without the employment of hustle and advertisement, employing no aids of artifice and emotion to carry women beyond their depths, and seeking ever to apply the principles that we proclaimed.

CHAPTER VI

THE FREEDOM LEAGUE FAILURE

We had broken up the original militant body because such action was forced upon us. The wrecking came from the other side. It was not possible for a few women chiefly responsible for the rally to the Constitution which secured the members' rights to have engineered such a movement out of destructive desires. The work we did was constructive. We took upon ourselves the burden of making a new start. We paid for our principles the price of shouldering a burden which was in some respects heavier than that which had had to be shouldered in the beginning. We started out with eyes open, stronger in some ways because of our disillusionment, to make the militant movement what it ought to

be. No more potent explanation of what we hoped our rebellion might lead to can be quoted than this: when the name of the society came to be changed this little central group gave unanimous support to the title of "The Emancipators," and the dreams we dreamed were as big as the title to which we aspired.

I have to admit frankly that we have failed. There are some half a hundred good reasons that can be urged in excuse of this fact, but none in denial of it. "The Emancipators" were laughed out of court by the rank and file of the society who rose to the height of "The Women's Freedom League" only by a small majority; and this rejection of the flag under which we could have gathered women of big ideas for the doing of big deeds was more ominous than we knew. At first brave efforts were made to grapple with the almost insuperable difficulties, and some sturdy fighting has been kept up to this time, but the original hope of the seceders has long vanished, and the Freedom League has dropped steadily to a position of mediocrity.

Capable and promising women began to drop away from it almost from the beginning. I have been called the first traitor; but this is folly. I can afford to wait my time as to the term of abuse; but the adjective is ridiculous. I am not the first to leave the movement discouraged. I am but the last of a long line of women who have had to do the same, women who have had to go out and put their hands to some other task, women who could not go back to the old militancy, women who were not permitted to develop the new, and for whom therefore there was nothing but individual action. The Freedom League had its opportunity, and lost it. It tied its own hands and committed political suicide. It was not strong enough to cast off the obsession of the earlier movement, and at the same time it exhausted itself in excessive recoil from the earlier excesses.

This failure has been due to many causes: from one point of view the League may be said to have succumbed to its inherent virtues, for with some rare exceptional occasions, for which I have been chiefly responsible, it has

sacrificed itself continuously to mistaken ideas of loyalty and generosity; from another point of view the failure may be traced to the equally inherent difficulties and limitations which all rebels have to overcome when they reach the work of construction. We carried with us in our refusal to submit to arbitrary authority the great body of democrats within the original society, and by the very conditions of the secession their attention became unduly confined to matters of machinery and management; we carried with us a body of women whose distaste of cheap and petty militancy had made them question militant tactics altogether; we carried with us women who were in a condition of protest against the pose of propriety, the shouldering out of the working women and the worship of wealth and class, but who brought with them the love of excitement and emotional appeal; we carried with us also a number of women suffering from personal grievances whose only difference with Mrs. Pankhurst's society was that they had been allowed no prominent place in it; and the number of rebel feminists willing

for service in the widest campaign of emancipation, were but as a little leaven in the great lump.

There was some justification for the women of parts who resented the suppression of their individuality and the denial of opportunity and liberty, for it was obvious that during the course of time all the women who had shared the burden and publicity of the early days were beings gradually edged out of the public eye, silenced, exiled from the centre of the movement, and excluded from the positions in the society to which their work entitled them. "Where is Annie Kenney?" people had begun to ask. "Where is Mary Gawthorpe?" And the same question might have been asked about others, and might as justly be asked now.

But the wrong done to the women themselves was not of much account by comparison with the wrong done to the movement. It lost in losing their service; it lost in losing their names; it lost its breadth of appeal which the varied personalities and capacities supplied. It is not upon exaggeration or

supposition that these statements are made ; they are based upon facts. A policy of assiduous self-seeking of the centre of the platform and equally assiduous pushing of all other women to the sides or over the edge cannot be continued long without leaving evidence. And there is evidence in plenty in the hands of those who are familiar with the working of the society from within. These policies of suppressing and edging out were supplemented by a policy of keeping out. When women of ability who were already sufficiently prominent to ensure that they would occupy positions in the front rank in any society to which they gave their services offered themselves to the trinity of leaders, they were systematically discouraged, except where they were regarded as amenable to influence or where special reasons existed for giving them temporary prominence. Many suffragists relying upon these circumstances stated their firm conviction that the *coup d'etat* itself was deliberately undertaken to rid the movement of women of prominence and character who had proved themselves difficult to manage—

women who, like Mrs. Despard and myself, could not be relied upon to subjugate their principles and understanding, upon request, and who, if edged out in the ordinary way, could not be trusted to drop into insignificance.

Under these circumstances it was not possible to look slightingly or with special disfavour upon the women with a grievance. Many of their grievances were quite real, and some were weighty. But the effect of the influx of this body of women was that the old type of militancy was desired, and it was expected that we would apply the same methods of action as those which had caused the unrest in the original society and given excuse for the declaration of autocracy. Had we been able to analyse these forces from the beginning we should have realised that our hopes that the militancy of revolution, as contrasted with the militancy of effect, would find a re-birth through the Freedom League, were doomed to disappointment.

At the very earliest stage, weaknesses manifested themselves which were to reduce the

democratic movement to impotence. There was little to be expected from a society that commenced its separate existence by making a free gift of the funds, name, prestige, and achievements, which had been acquired by the efforts of all combined, to the section from which it has had to secede on a matter of principle. This impractical generosity hampered the League financially from the beginning, reduced its status, and supplied a precedent for further sacrifice of a like kind. The movement next committed itself to a course that meant general impotence. Its incapacity to set itself free from the obsession exercised by the dictators of the other society showed itself, within a few months of the split, in the passing of a self-denying ordinance which forbade its members to make any defence under attack or to utter any criticism of the sister militant society. This meant the suppression of its new-found individuality, the sacrifice of all its potentialities, a reduction of the League to a position of futility.

It was not possible for the new society to initiate a policy of bold attack, to defend its

action or inaction at a particular juncture, while its speakers and writers were debarred from any utterance that might be construed as a reflection upon Mrs. Pankhurst's organisation. Under such restraint the League lost its distinctive character almost before it acquired it, and became a mere echo of the larger group. One example of the conditions which prevail will suffice. The Tax-Resistance Campaign, organised first by the Freedom League, was regarded with scant respect by its members, and in the course of over three years only about one hundred women took this line of protest against disfranchisement. But when some months ago the Social and Political Union declared that "the time has now come for women to refuse to pay taxes" the policy was hailed with acclamation as a new and brilliant stroke of genius. A few words of gentle reminder that the policy had been applied for three years by the Freedom League, while individual women had resisted taxation since the early 'seventies, and that a special Tax-Resistance League formed with Freedom League assistance now

existed, was commented upon as ungenerous by our own members.

No advance, especially no militant advance, was possible under such conditions. It was not possible for us to explain our general position to the public. It was not possible for us to defend our own course of action or to contrast it favourably with that of the other militant society. No original action stood a ghost of a chance of general acceptance among us, for we could not defend or explain it without appearing to cast aspersions upon the fellow-militants. When the errors of judgment of which we were guilty were pointed out by our members we could not retort by indicating the worse errors of the sister society from which we were trying to escape. We were committed to submit to all criticism and to utter none. We were condemned to seek after such applications of militant tactics as would neither excite the fear nor the contempt of those whose minds were wholly absorbed by the policy enunciated from Clements' Inn. The only vigorous lines of action permitted us

were lines of imitation, and since our strength and membership were of an essentially different nature than those of the Political Union we could only appear as bad seconds in the game. It is astonishing to me now that we managed to make any militant changes at all. But of all of those upon which Freedom League advocates pride themselves, I believe, the only one which escaped all condemnation from within our own society is the Grille protest in the House in which Miss Matters played the chief part.

Where the self-denying ordinance was not in operation the older policy itself blocked the way. The case of questioning at meetings has been referred to. If the interruption policy had not been continuously applied the Freedom League might have carried out successfully its attempt to do some serious political work by carefully planned and conducted questioning. But this was rendered impossible. Similar impediments blocked other valuable lines of protest. Ultimately the result has so worked out that nothing can go uncondemned within the self-governing

militant society which has not already been endorsed by the Political Union.

On the one side we were limited by this obsession of the Freedom League by the Pankhurst influence: on the other side we were as strictly limited by the recoil from the excesses of the original society. The first limitation was due to the weakness of the mass: the second must be placed in a particular degree on the shoulders of the leaders. I frankly admit my personal responsibility, acknowledging that I can offer no adequate excuse. The elected leaders of the League had been nauseated by the campaign of publicity, and rushing to the opposite extreme we neglected the most elementary rules of Press notification; the turning of the limelight upon individuals made us afraid of the slightest personal advertisement, such as is required to secure the attention of the public. As a result legitimate advertisement was sacrificed along with illegitimate. This affected the financial position, for modern subscribers to reform movements like to see a return for their money; in Mrs. Pankhurst's

society every possible arrangement is made to gratify this natural craving, nothing, however sacred, being allowed to interfere with its satisfaction; in the Freedom League the subscriber is almost ignored.

Women who in the one society had been bred to give in the midst of public plaudits, to receive the warmest thanks of the leaders, and to feel a sense of well-expended gold in the big advertisements and the exaggeration, could not be expected to give generously when all these circumstances were withdrawn. The atmosphere of the rebel society was too cool. The Freedom League officials were not capable of carrying out such methods of financial appeal; this is shown as clearly by their one ghastly failure as by their otherwise consistent refusals to stoop to the attempt.

A similar recoil manifested itself in the tendency to shun platform boom; but for my share in this work, though I believe it was carried to excess, I can never apologise. We suffered from a necessary reaction towards truth-telling, and on some glorious occasions almost achieved it. But the egotistic

exaggeration of language and a confident over-estimation of the effects of our words and works had become almost as the breath of life to a large proportion of women in the movement. The absence of hyperbole and clamour took the heart and courage out of them. They stood shivering and naked in an atmosphere in which an attempt was made to use reason and fact as the basis of speech and propaganda. They sought such shelter as they could with the more emotional of the speakers in the new society, and if this proved insufficient they fled back to the warm corners of self-satisfaction provided by the Social and Political Union.

For another bad aspect of the rebound the members were more responsible than the leaders. This was the development of red-tape democracy, which caused the concentration of over-much attention upon matters of machinery and management, and tended to develop the worship of the letter rather than the spirit of democratic control. If no other experiences had tended to show me this truth my experiences within the Freedom League

would have proved to me that a mob with a machine can be the worst kind of tyrant. With this knowledge I could have forgiven Mrs. Pankhurst her repudiation of democracy if it had really culminated in the assertion of her own liberty and not in an aggression upon that of others. In earlier days the denunciation of government by anarchists had always left me adhering to the practical possibilities of working the governmental machine, and in spite of much sympathy with the anarchist ideal I held firmly to political democracy. But now I can understand what the anarchist means when he says that the machinery of democratic government if successfully employed merely serves to impose a mob tyranny, and if unsuccessfully employed only draws the attention of the people from realities to the machine itself. Both these evils have been exemplified in the Freedom League.

While the cleavage was fresh in the public mind the Freedom League was recognised as having potentialities, but in the further practice of militancy it has naturally failed to win from the Press or the public any special

recognition. No essential difference between it and the Social and Political Union has been established; the tone and direction of militant tactics has continued unchanged to the outsider. He did not mark these small differences upon which the Freedom League prided itself; he did not know that this society refrained from using militancy for advertisement and frankly admitted that its deeds of disorder were upon its own head; for the League made those changes in its attitude but failed to make them public. As a natural result it has come to be rightly regarded as a smaller militant group, sometimes milder than the larger, sometimes more aggressive, but always imitative.

It is suggested that much more good for the suffrage movement and for the Freedom League would have followed if I had done my work as a critic within the ranks, and used the advantages of my position to bring about redress. It is argued quite plausibly that I could rely upon a following of earnest women who, while possibly differing from me in details, would have energetically backed the

efforts I had made to redress the chief evils I point out. But I know my Freedom League, and I know my own strength ; this course was not possible. It would have ended in disruption of the Freedom League; it would have turned the whole energies of the society into a mighty wrangle; it would have produced none of those benefits which I believe will follow from my going out into the wilderness alone, there to say my say.

The members of the Freedom League who urge this course are not honest with themselves nor with me. They know that no sufficient exposure of the evils to be redressed could be made without attacking the Women's Social and Political Union. They are aware of the existence of the no-criticism self-denying ordinance. Even if this could be repealed, and it could not be without loss of many members of the League, the eradication of the evils would necessitate constant attack upon the autocratic society for some considerable time. Would they prefer this course to the one I have chosen? They are aware, too, that in the matter of the future of militancy

I have very strong views, and that those views are not shared by other prominent individuals among my late colleagues.

Briefly, I do not believe that the slur cast upon the work of the Conciliation Committee by the Social and Political Union has been deserved. I believe that militancy is not justifiable at the present juncture. I believe that if the big constitutional issue had not arisen the Conciliation Committee would have carried some measure of woman suffrage during 1911, and that neither the Government nor the Conciliation Committee can be accused of such neglect or betrayal of our interests as justified the breaking of the truce. The Government did not arrange the dissolution in order to postpone the Suffrage Bill, and we are guilty of silly hyperbole if we say so. We have been temporarily swamped by the constitutional issue, but that is no reason why we should seek to rush to Holloway *via* Westminster. I believe that militancy *alone* would never get the vote, and that only by conciliation can the difficulties of the last stage be bridged. If the Conciliation Committee

is given its opportunity I believe that it may yet bring things to an early finish, and until its incapacity is clear it is a matter of honour and common sense for suffragists to observe the conditions of peace. This also I believe: that the Government should be given every chance of keeping its pledge to the Conciliation Committee within a reasonable time. There should be no foolish haste, no hurry, no acting under the impulse to be revenged, at this stage. But if the Government should refuse to redeem its pledge, and militancy be again resorted to, it should be real militancy, the militancy of violence and revolution. This or nothing. This is my position: the Freedom League position is very different; it is prepared to continue the feeble imitative policy; to follow the Political Union; to act because Mrs. Pankhurst has acted; to strike with little effect when it ought to stand silent; to strike with equally little effect when it ought to strike hard.

Even this is not all. The Freedom League members who ask why my severance should have preceded my criticism might by

reflection have found still other reasons why it must be so. I do not any longer believe in the potentialities of the Freedom League. I think that it has not the power to fulfil the task that it set out to do, to secure the general freedom of women. I know that it carried over-much emotion with it from the original society, and that robbed by the cleavage of idols that erred in seizing power and position for themselves, it has set itself up a new idol. I do not believe in the worshipping of idols, even the better ones that are human. I believe that it leads to loss of independence, courage and conviction. I believe that in propaganda and in spirit the Freedom League has shown a growing tendency to narrowness during the last two years. I believe that it wants to put the whole burden of thought and action upon its officers, while retaining all responsibility for itself, to place upon them all the limits of democracy and all the burdens of dictatorship. And these facts rob me of any shreds of confidence that my general discontent has left me. I do not believe in a commercial weighing of the gifts one gives

to a reform movement; but neither do I believe in waste. Such power and capacities as I possess I must use to the best advantage, and I do not believe that they were being so used within the Freedom League. I can do better work for the emancipation of women from the outside.

CHAPTER VII

THE DOMINATION ESTABLISHED

The effect of the cleavage upon the Clement's Inn section was such as to intensify its weaknesses and to reduce it to a lower level. The evils that had remained of small dimensions in the face of the little criticism that was allowed grew to greater proportion when they were entirely unchecked. The hostages given to win the fashionable and wealthy section of women increased in number and degree. The pose of convention became universal; the movement became honeycombed with snobbery. The door was shut upon the real revolutionary spirit and purpose, and at the same time the functions of politics were glorified and exaggerated in order to make sacrifice and subscription worth while. Extravagant

expectations were deliberately awakened on the one side to stir the rebel women to take part in protests, while on the other side no definite or concrete ground for fear was allowed to disturb the most intolerant conventionalists.

It is noticeable that the simplest development from the claim of voting rights for women has been slurred over and evaded. The militant advocate cannot be brought to admit in public even that she desires to see women in Parliament; she evades the issue, lest the mere suffragist should be alarmed—lest the conservative and moneyed element should be alienated. Under the action of this same influence the suffrage demand, based upon the principle of sex-equality in every other suffrage society, in this case to be based upon consideration of expediency.

Until the Women's Social and Political Union had been transformed into a trinitarian dictatorship, all women's suffrage societies were pledged to sex-equality. They asked for equal sex rights in voting. But the Women's Social and Political Union abandoned this

claim. It flung away the basis of principle. It declared on its official publication, and in its official utterances, that it demanded the Parliamentary vote for women tax-payers. I do not refer to the device of printing in heavy type, the statement beginning, "We are not asking for votes for all women," under the declaration that the object of the Union is to obtain votes for women on the same terms as they are or may be granted to men. This, a piece of political jugglery, from which the dictators could find several plausible ways of escape. But printed letter paper was issued soon after the split on which the old claim, "We demand the Parliamentary vote for women on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men," was replaced by "Tax-paying women are entitled to the Parliamentary vote." This cutting down of the demand was perhaps sound, political sense; but it was undoubtedly hastened by the presence within the society of an increasing number of women of the wealthier classes, whose conservative tendencies could not safely be opposed. The women of the old school would never of

themselves have reduced their primary demand. If less had been offered them they would probably have accepted it—as in the case of the Conciliation Bill—but they would not have gone out of the way to show that they were willing to take less than a measure of principle. The suffragists of the new school made the sacrifice quite calmly. They were out to win, not sex-equality, but any measure of votes for women—any obtainable measure. It was one of the prices they paid to hurry.

All the way along the line similar sacrifices have been made, and gradually the movement has lost status as a serious rebellion and become a mere emotional obsession, a conventional campaign for a limited measure of legislation, with militancy as its instrument of publicity and the expression of its hurry.

The leaders of the militant movement do not want a revolution; we were mistakened who believed that they did: they would be afraid of one. They want a measure of women suffrage on the statute book, and

they have engineered an advertising campaign to secure this end with the least possible delay. They are prepared to rush and raid and advertise until they get what they want. The Suffrage Bill is long overdue, and some measures of hurry are requisite and commendable. But hurry at any price is suicide. It is not the Suffrage Bill that has to be saved; it is the women. And when women are being sacrificed for votes; when the personal liberty of women, the integrity of women, the self-respect of women, the mind and spirit of women, their warm hearts and their rebel souls—when these are being sacrificed for a piece of machinery, a mere tool of government, it is time for an examination of the forces at work, for exposure and criticism. I believe that the movement of militancy has exploited and betrayed many women; I believe that it has abused the name and spirit of revolution, and waved a red flag from the seclusion of a select drawing-room; I believe that it has given itself to a thousand servitudes to win one small symbol of liberty. It has sacrificed

its principles in its internal management. It has cut down its legislative demand. It has imposed upon women the very evils of subjection from which it sets itself to deliver them. It has given women chains that it may win for them a weapon that it has taught them not to use. The success that it will bring to women will "leave them crushed as no defeat had done."

The Women's Social and Political Union now depends upon personal dominance for its existence. The leaders impose a yoke of emotional control by which the very virtues of the members are exploited; they produce a system of mental and spiritual slavery. The women who succumb to it exhibit a type of self-subjection, not less objectionable than the more ordinary self-subjection of women to men, to which it bears a close relation. The yoke is imposed by a mingling of elements of deliberately worked up emotion, by the exercise of affectional and personal charm, by an all-pervading system of mutual glorification in which each of the three leaders by turn sounds the praises of the others, by

the deliberate exclusion of other women from all positions of prominence, by a policy of shameless boasting and booming, by an ingenious system of clever special pleading through which everything the Political Union does is chronicled and magnified, and everything that other suffragists do is belittled or ignored, and by that undoubted financial and political stage management which caters for all the elements of snobbery and narrowness and intolerance, while employing the language of outlaws in revolt. This obsession is one of the most remarkable manifestations to be seen in the political life of to-day. As with all emotional degradations, its victims glory in it. Every woman snared ensnares her fellow and adds the weight of her obsession to the burden upon the minds of the rest. Under this direction the militant movement is a movement of political revivalism—that, and nothing more.

The individual members of this society are not the only suffragists affected. The bad influence is strong enough to affect all. Though the Political Union at the worst is

insolently and brutally indifferent to the rights of other societies, and at the best scornfully tolerant of them, these other societies yield to its pretensions at the cost of their own progress. The National Union of Suffrage Societies at first made a practice of repudiation after every militant demonstration, but this has died down. To quote a well-known suffragist politician, it has been found that it does not pay. The amazing protest of November last, prior to the Dissolution—which appeared to have nothing to recommend it, and seriously hampered progress along the only avenue of advance open at that time—was merely commented upon adversely in the editorial notes of *The Common Cause*. The necessary public exposure of the folly of militant action at that juncture was not forthcoming. The Freedom League officials dared to defend their abstention—and the most assertive section of their members rose in arms.

In this particular society the obsession has acted in three ways: It has limited and restricted militant action to the lines approved

in practice by the W.S.P.U.—every deviation from the political lines of protest employed by Mrs. Pankhurst having been criticised or boycotted to death; it has applied the same rule of weak imitation to the general election policy; and it has insisted upon the suppression of any murmur of dissent from the decrees of Clement's Inn. The attitude of its members towards the Police Court protests, the Bermondsey protest, and the Tax-Resistance movement, as well as the inconsistency in the policies applied by the League in the January and December elections, can all be quoted in support of the statement that the Freedom League has neglected the first law of self-preservation, and has destroyed its own potentialities by a policy of weak imitation and weaker adulation.

In part the suffrage societies that have suffered from this disease have been impressed by the smart methods and the noise and rush and the poses of omnipotence and revolution; in part they have yielded because they have found that protest not only failed to secure redress of grievances, but rather intensified

the loss to be endured; and in part they have submitted because of the fear of harming the suffrage cause in the public eye by exposing the disunion that existed. A show of peace has thus been preserved in the suffrage world, but it has been the sort of peace preserved in many households where one member of the family is a bully and the rest for the sake of name and blood are constrained to hide their injuries, and to put a fair face upon an unhappy condition.

The cultivation of personal dominance by the leaders of the Political Union is not an unconscious or accidental happening. It is deliberate. It finds its origin in a determination to win early results, in egotism, and in an experience that has bred distrust in the majority of other women. Before the militant movement began Mrs. Pankhurst laboured long among women who could be, and had been, deceived by party leaders or cajoled by husband, brother, or son; and she has come to believe that the only honest and independent feminism is the feminism that agrees with her, accepts her leadership, and

is prepared to submit conscience and principles to her dictation. Only those women are to be trusted who can be dominated and controlled. She and her co-adjutors are convinced that they are capable of carrying the suffrage movement to victory; they believe that other women admitted to the inner councils will only interfere with the carrying out of their plans; they believe that the spirit of unquestioning submission in the mass of members is preferable to voting rights and free discussion because it is the only condition which will give them complete and continuous control of the machine by which their desires can be realised. They do not believe that any other women in the world are to be trusted with a share of the power and direction of the movement, and they are determined to take no risks with colleagues, with constitutions, or with loyalty. They believe in themselves—a most commendable thing to do in reason—but they believe in themselves in a way which destroys their belief in other women, and this is neither admirable nor wise. I do not want to magnify

the evil of this distrust. I have not a great deal of trust in either men or women in the mass myself, but I have less trust in the leaders of the mass. There is far more danger of corruption and one-sidedness, of narrowness and final shipwreck in absolutely unlimited autocracy than in the stupidest forms of democracy. And the choice in this movement was not between the one and the other; there were middle ways open for use, which would have provided a wide discretion for the leaders and the right of some share of control for the members; but these were rejected. The clean sweep of machinery was the only thing which would give the trinitarian group unlimited power, and the clean sweep of machinery it had to be.

If the intention of the women concerned was to bring the movement through just those stages and conditions which have manifested themselves, it was perhaps a wise thing from the point of view of the autocrats that autocracy was declared. For there would certainly have been rebellions against some of the sacrifices paid to the spirit of hurry. The

purchasing of the support of the respectables and the fashionables by limited speech and the pose of propriety, by the censoring of persons and subjects, and by the dropping of working-class women and industrial propaganda, aroused strong feeling in many quarters, and would certainly have been met with protest had an avenue for such protest been available. I believe that some limits to the extravagance of speech which persistently magnified the results of the militant action undertaken would also have had to be made. "I strongly object to this absurd use of superlatives," said a staunch militant of the autocratic society to me very soon after the split. "It makes us look silly to those who know." She spoke for many others beside herself. The effects of both militant and anti-government election activity have been absurdly exaggerated, on the usual commercial principles that he who shouts loudest gets the most customers, and if you keep shouting long enough people will believe that what you say is true. The hyperbole has been so patent as to become blatant

and the nerves of many willing servitors have been put on edge by persistence in this practice. Undoubtedly some system of representative control would have secured the moderation of this evil.

I think also that there is no doubt but that the wishes of the members if given opportunity for expression, would have interfered with the system by which the regular London meetings, at Queen's Hall and Albert Hall, were retained as the private preserves of the directorate. Even the most earnest supporters get tired of the same oratorical fare when it is set forth week after week, in season and out of season. And if no reasons of justice, good taste, and the advantage of the movement, would have moved the mass of members to demand a system of fairer play, the study of their own comfort undoubtedly would have produced some slight improvement. This theory of mine is borne out by the fact that on one historic occasion at the Albert Hall a speaker of early prominence who had been edged into the background, and who was present on the platform though

not upon the programme of speakers, was called for so vigorously from the audience that she had to be allowed to speak.

This distrust in the body of women, this fear of other women of capacity, is a petty thing. There were some who admired the bold defiance of the declaration of autocracy. It was a brave and necessary deed, masculine in vigour, I was once informed. But when one examines why it was necessary it begins to lose its noble proportions and to become not only an aggression upon the rights of the members but an insult to their intelligence. When we find some suffragists who, in spite of this insult, are prepared to admire the deed still, we are driven to believe that there must be something in that pitiful proverb that states that a woman always loves the creature that masters her.

Steadily before the cleavage, more rapidly since, the firm rule of personal authority has been built up. Under its shadow the members have been enslaved, and the leaders have given themselves to seal the bondage. Under democracy there is admitted control of the

leaders by the mass, and this is often found to be irksome by the men and women of initiative and capacity who submit to it; but under autocracy the leaders who have to rely upon personal loyalty are under obligations that are much more degrading. In the one case the leaders are governed by the will of the majority; in the other they are forced to use the weapons of finesse, strategy, influence, sentiment, and personal appeal—they have to give *themselves* in order to keep their hold upon their creatures. To this the leaders of the Social and Political Union have been reduced; where they would not employ reason and argument they have had to employ emotion, personal charm, affectional appeal; and the flood of extravagance to which this has led has brought further dangers and degradations in its train.

CHAPTER VIII

A CRITICISM OF MILITANCY

It is indubitably true that militancy has brought new life to the suffrage movement in Great Britain, but it brought that new life upon a lower plane. The movement has posed as a revolution; but those who hoped from it a great human emancipation as well as a small political one were doomed from the beginning to disappointment. Militancy as designed and carried out by Miss Pankhurst and her mother has not tended to work a revolution by the enslaved woman much less to work a revolution in her. It has not been designed to clear away the accumulated barbarities of ages in order to prepare the way for a gospel of free womanhood.

The experience of the last five years goes

to prove that militancy is the exploitation of the natural forces of sex revolt for the purposes of advertisement. Militant machinery is put into action purely for its advertising values. It is a bold method of advertising what is now quite a common-place and conventional movement—a movement as conventional as Liberalism and Conservatism, and every other 'ism which to-day goes uncensored. In these days of great hurry even the old and strong and wealthy conventional things find themselves in need of the fillip of occasional new attractions, and the organisers of the Social and Political Union recognised from the beginning this modern need. They knew that there were forces of rebellion seething in the women around them. They knew that these forces could be directed in any chosen channel by those who were courageous enough to make a beginning. They made the beginning; but they dared not make the movement the mouthpiece of revolt. They chose to indulge only in so much militancy as would attract attention and keep the public and the politician aware of them. They coquetted

with rebellion. They made revolution into a political red herring. They started in the political world a gigantic game of bluff to which every other consideration has been sacrificed.

They knew that twenty years of regular rebellion against servitude would fail to attract these people to whom the Press and the politician and the public gave fictitious value, and by whose co-operation alone they could hope for the early legislative results they sought. They knew these things and they fought on lines in accordance with their knowledge. They fought to win. They demonstrated to attract the attention and adherence of the type of people they wanted, just as a business firm advertises to bring the class of customers with whom it is most profitable to deal.

I need only give four facts for those who hesitate to accept this conclusion. It is the regular practice in Mrs. Pankhurst's society for all militant demonstrations to be publicly announced beforehand by the agency of the Press, by posters, by handbills widely

distributed, and by various other attractive devices. The preliminary notices of the next show with a new attraction in the bill, are already tickling the palate of the public. Is this the method of revolution or stage management? If these means were employed for the summoning of scattered supporters at a moment of crisis, such as the declaration of war, they would deserve every commendation. But this is not the case. All the soldiers required in action can be reached without publicity at all. Furthermore, every chance of stealing a march upon the enemy is thrown away by this method, and the authorities are always given sufficient notice to enable them to reduce the protest to the level of a stereotyped Palace Yard performance. This preliminary announcement in itself is sufficient proof that militancy is not intended to achieve anything more serious than advertisement. Then militancy is always so arranged as to produce the maximum of effect for the minimum of work done. A revolutionary movement would consider the work to be achieved and leave the effect to

take care of itself. It would not hinge its chief demonstrations of discontent upon some technical legal point, some political usage or custom; it would hinge them upon its great basic right. It would fling its defiance into any direction in which it could do the most damage upon the barriers set up against it. It would strike to destroy, and not to advertise. The big human revolt would be the real thing, the advertisement a non-essential effect.

I give as my third fact of my indictment that all militant demonstrations, with perhaps a solitary exception, have failed as *revolution* —they have only been successful as advertisement. It is only necessary to ask the question, Would revolutionists have been prepared to continue tactics which always failed? The deputations never get into the House, the meeting-smashers never smash the meetings. If they progressed in that direction one would willingly wait. But they do not. The militant leaders make extravagant estimates of the success of these tactics. They proclaim every new failure as a success. This is an acknowledgment that they regard

effective advertising and the failure to perform as success itself, that they are satisfied with it, that it is all they are out for.

The fourth fact to be noted is that the burden of disorder deliberately planned is always publicly transferred after its occurrence to the shoulders of the police and the Government. I hold no brief for the Government. I know too well how it has abused its power, and retaliated against the militancy of irritation with equally petty and objectionable brutality. But I strongly affirm that the policy of planning outbreaks and then using the resulting imprisonments as a stick with which to beat the Government is an unworthy political game. It is neither revolution nor consistency, nor does it show a high standard of honour. Revolution should never be ashamed of itself. It should never evade its responsibility. It should stand frankly upon the human right of insurrection against any imposed injustice. It should glory in its deeds of revolt. If the object for which militancy is undertaken does not justify these methods of revolution then it

should not be honoured and magnified by the use of the name. It is farcical for the phrases of revolution to be grandiloquently employed upon every possible occasion while the resulting deeds are explained away or wriggled out of. One cannot at the same time be the aggressor and the innocent victim. I do not condemn advertisement; I regard it as a necessary evil in our modern large communities. I do not condemn revolution: I approve of it with all my mind and all my strength. But I do condemn the exploitation of the revolutionary spirit and the revolutionary idea for mere advertising purposes, and I do condemn the policy of claiming the revolutionary glory while repudiating the revolutionary responsibility.

It is only fair to say that the Freedom League must be absolved from both these reproaches; it has never used militancy for advertisement—and has, indeed, lost both money and popularity by this abstention; and it has never pretended that its protests were anything but protests. Militancy in this society has failed to do its work and to rise to

the height of revolution, because of divided counsels, red-tape democracy, and an incapacity to emancipate itself from the emotional influences of the Social and Political Union, but it has not been cloaked under the respectable guise of deputations, or used as the beating of the big drum.

There is something further to be said about the promotion of militancy as a policy of irritation. From this point of view the double shuffle referred to above, by which all the responsibility for militant demonstrations is placed on the shoulders of the Government while all the glory accruing is claimed by the demonstrators, becomes even more distasteful. From the beginning the tactics have been deliberately intentioned to produce retaliation in order to work up the martyr cry and the martyr spirit. As in all other franchise movements the vote itself is recognised as insufficient to arouse women to unremitting struggle. Without the spur of the martyr cry the modern re-birth of the suffrage movement would have been less a phenomenal rocket rise to the sky—and down again—and more a

steady growth. But the steady growth would have doubled the time required for the winning of success and was not, therefore, in the running. The retaliation of the Government was angled for, and the passionate impulse it awakened has supplied the place of conviction. The policy, in brief, was to irritate the Government until it should strike back and then to exploit the forces of feeling aroused; and the Government lent itself to the game.

No observer of the militant movement can deny certain outstanding qualities in its dictators. They have the power to turn converts into followers, and followers into worshippers. They refuse to know when they are beaten or when they have made mistakes. They can live up to amazing pretensions, which would subdue greater and more sensitive women, without a quiver or a blush. They have shouldered a huge responsibility with cool courage. They have demonstrated the woman's capacity to play the political game, and have outshone the male politician in the capacity for hustle and advertisement. They are as adept in the use of flattery and

sentiment and suggestion as any ministers of the most effete government or superstition. But, in spite of all these qualities, militant tactics, as they have directed them, these tactics of advertisement and irritation, would not have survived the first year of application if it had not been for the co-operation of the Government, and especially of the Home Office. Lord Gladstone must be credited with much of this responsibility. Without his assistance the militancy of effect rather than execution would have been played out long ago, even for the purposes of publicity. He magnified technical offences into crimes. He exalted demonstrators into martyrs. He made the Government look silly and sheepish and vindictive, and the women greater than their deeds. He played the part of a big school bully, by contrast with whom the women, like ordinary schoolboys, became heroes. He supplied to the movement the needed stimulus of passionate enthusiasm, the spirit that always rises under oppression, and he contributed to supply the second need of advertisement.

From one point of view the late Home Secretary may be given a large share of the blame for the restriction of militancy to its original narrow channel. I believe the forces of revolt at first at the disposal of the movement were strong and stern enough to have found bigger and better ways of protest, if these early partisan efforts had been allowed to remain in their natural insignificance. The whole area of administration, supplying dozens of cases daily of unfair laws and laws unfairly administered, was open before us. A system of protest against these administrative evils could have been devised. The obstruction of legislation and interference with its administration might have been developed. The great natural forces of emotion could have been more legitimately aroused by protests against the real victimisation of women in our law courts than by the creation of artificial victims. Industrial evils were open to the same legitimate use. These would have been wider ways and they would have wakened bigger forces. Not enfranchisement alone, but the awakening which must precede

emancipation would have resulted from such a crusade, and it would have improved incidentally the administration of law, prepared the way for a purified Statute Book, and instilled and vindicated in its advance every principle of individual liberty while it was winning for women political liberty. It was towards the development of some such policy that the Police Court Protests were originated by the Freedom League, but these were contemptuously committed to death during the first few weeks of their application by women who, being obsessed by the purely political advertising methods originating at Clement's Inn, could neither understand them nor believe in the possibility of a wider way of revolt.

In spite of the pain and suffering it entails, militancy is more popular than suffrage. If militancy should come to be abandoned, because considered no longer necessary, a large number of present adherents would drop away from the movement. The means has come to be elevated above the end. The condition is unconscious, of course, but it is plainly

shown in the speech and action of the average militant woman. It is the only conclusion that can be drawn from the occurrence of militant demonstrations at moments when no adequate advantage can be obtained from them. It is demonstrated by the exceeding bitterness with which anti-militant suffragists are treated. You may have given all but your life for the Suffrage Cause, but if you declare against any militant action you are at once judged, condemned, and executed. Your status with the militants is gone; your courage is questioned. You are enveloped in an atmosphere of suspicion. "Do you think she is sound?" is asked mistrustfully; "Is he honest?" This, accompanied with shrugged shoulders and lifted brows, as a final condemnation. Nobody believes in the critic after that.

It is not extraordinary to find such an atmosphere about a militant movement. Emotional revivalism sufficiently strong to impel its votaries to sacrifice is always intolerant. A necessary accompaniment of such exaltation is persecution. This is partly due to the

state of nervous tension which necessarily exists, and partly to the contrivance of the priesthood. Militant action, which has become a fetish, must be protected like every other fetish, from the light of reason and the breath of criticism. Every superstition employs the same means; while criticism from without can be interpreted as vulgar abuse, and criticism from within subtly made to appear as treachery, the most irrational fetish can be preserved from injury.

The popularity of militancy within the movement does not only lend itself to intolerance, it threatens another danger. Manifestations of the revival spirit are not always as easily checked as they are started. The incantations of anointed priests and the use of symbols and mysteries have always produced undue influence upon the human mind; and once the mind is completely mastered by emotional excess the discretion of the most wise and humane leaders cannot always provide a sufficient curb. The danger is great in itself, and it is only too strongly accentuated by the popularity of militancy with the Press

and the public. Both welcome militant demonstrations. The modern lust for excitement in the masses is catered for by newspapers, by promoters of sport, and by political parties. The public loves a drama with lust and blood in it. The details of gory fights and fearful calamities are read with insatiable appetite and gloomy enjoyment in every corner of the land. Militancy invests the suffrage movement with the same unholy charm. The only drawback it has for the mob is that it is not bloody enough. At aviation meetings the men must fly—even if they fly to death. The suffrage demonstrations would be more popular if a few people could be killed in them, but they cater successfully for the craving for thrills when there is no greater excitement going. Militancy has one advantage over murders and accidents in that one is always informed beforehand when and where to come and see it.

It does not matter whether the young barbarians come from the East End or the West end. They gather for the row. By choosing the method of advertisement and dramatic

display the militants bring numbers to share the excitement provided. But the numbers are not with them as a mass. And the folly of the advertising short-cut is shown when one remembers that had the materials at the command of the early movement been fully used, this weakness would have vanished long ago. The London mob could have been won in two years; but it could have only been won through the working classes. The working class women, and those having the nearest power to appeal to them, were either edged out of the movement or stifled long ago. They brought the danger of big demands with them, and it was not realised that they also brought great strength.

The lines of protest first used have been somewhat monotonously repeated. There has not been any evolution, any evidence of progressive design. Public meetings are still roused to momentary excitement by the ejection of a few interrupters, as they were five years ago. Deputations are still beaten back from St. Stephen's entrance to the House of Commons, though they are now

big enough to get in if they did not themselves bar the door. The only real advance has been the hunger-striking, which came with its mad bravery from Russia. Nothing else has changed, except the number of women involved; the only growth has been a growth of numbers. Stone-throwing and such expressions of violence are not new developments. Militant suffragists have always been as violent as they dare, but the early violence was explained away or excused rather than vindicated, lest it should have an ill effect upon the public mind. The presence in the ranks of such women as Mrs. Despard, women temperamentally and by conviction opposed to violence, has tended to discourage and delay publicly given approval, but it has not prevented the application. Now violence is openly advocated—but only the small violences which can be effectively contrasted with the greater ones committed by the Government. This is not advance; it is the search for a new thrill for the public and a new chain for the women who pay the price.

Just as there has been something monotonous in the lines of activity, so there has been present an element of ruthless generalship. The sacrifices that may be justly called for in a rebellion are out of all proportion in a publicity campaign. Where the rebel leader would be extolled for a courageous conquering of natural emotion the advertising agent will seek justification in vain. In this movement the leaders have always appeared to be more tender of heart to the enemy than to the women in the ranks. It is not any sufficient excuse for this error to urge that the leaders concerned sacrifice themselves as well as their followers. The leaders stand to gain much more than the rest, and for themselves under these circumstances the sacrifice may be worth while. It is not a small thing to secure that you shall go down the ages, to the exclusion of all other suffragists, as the winners of votes for women.

It is not easy to win the militant advocates to deal fairly with objections to the present militant policy. Most of them immediately assume that the doubter has recanted and

must be dealt with as an opponent. This is not my position. I am opposed to the kind of militancy; not to the fighting, but to the fighting on present lines. Neither is the decision on the question of the value of militant efforts to be made as a choice between the dead level of pre-militant days and the present greater vitality. Any movement having an ounce of energy could have made an advance on the suffrage conditions of 1900. The same reply is sufficient answer to those who argue as though the condemnation of present militancy shut the door on everything but peaceful propaganda. The case is utterly different. It lies here: the great forces of sex revolt were alive in the hearts of women and urgent for expression in the early days of the century. Only an outlet was wanting. The outlet was found; and those who found it were trusted with the direction of its course of expression. The question is not "Are the forces of rebellion behind this movement?" Of course they are. It is not "Have the women shown great powers of sacrifice and courage?" I know of

those things as much as any. The question is "Have the leaders justified their trust, have they made the best use of the forces and the women given over into their hands?" And to this question I give an emphatic "No." I do not ask if the leaders have made a better use of these forces than was made of other forces by leaders of an earlier day. This again is not the point. You cannot vindicate one sinner by the fall of another. The great forces of revolt were there for the using, and I claim that instead of being used they have been exploited and abused.

It is no use evading the issue by restating the same proposition in the form that momentum was necessary to awaken the dead movement and that this has been supplied. The whole value of momentum depends upon the direction in which it causes things to move. My contention is that the momentum supplied by the kind of militancy developed under the Pankhurst domination has moved along a narrow channel to a purely political goal, and has brought the movement to a lower plane in the process. A choice of bolder and broader

methods, an acceptance of imprisonment if it should come, but not a deliberate seeking of it for itself, an energetic seizing of all the avenues of protest, instead of the specialising upon the repetition of one or two artificially contrived ones—this course would have produced a bigger momentum and brought women by a higher and broader road to their ultimate goal.

Militant advocates who use the revolutionary phrases talk of terrorism moving the politician, and of cowards only praying to the devil they fear. But these are cant phrases employed by the directorate for the exact purpose of keeping such young persons as can be deceived by them in a posture of admiration. There has not been either revolution or terrorism in this movement, nor yet any of the red-blooded devilry so much admired by modern decadents; these things have only been aped; these claims are sham. And even politicians cannot be expected to yield so much to the sham terrorism which gives them merely an occasional physical pang, half of which is dread of a ridiculous situation, as

they would yield to a dignified massing of protestant forces clamorous for the redress of wrongs really suffered by real victims of present conditions.

I put the position as I see it here; revolt there would have been and must have been. It was inevitable. The tragedy of it is that revolt has been allowed to fall under the unchallenged direction of those who can see nothing but the political outlook and use nothing but artificial and essentially small methods.

I have been twice to Holloway, and have been prominent in a fairly large number of other protests and demonstrations during the last five years. I have been personally responsible for the planning of many militant protests, and have issued many calls to danger duty in the Freedom League. I do not regret my own part in this work, nor that of the women who have answered my call. Until last year my thought on this subject had not matured. But a year of more or less enforced leisure has given me time to go back to the beginning again and revisit the land of

promise ; it has given me an opportunity of seeing the movement from without and fighting things out with my own soul. And these are my convictions : militancy on the present lines is not effective; it is not justified; it is not justifiable; it is a wasteful and extravagant method of advertisement. It was always small in practice, but now it is small in spirit; and all the world of our enemies sees that it is small.

I shall deal later with the political situation and the return to militancy which finally severed me from the movement; but apart from it entirely I believe that such militancy as we have so far had cannot be further indulged in without damage to the lesser suffrage cause and to the greater cause of the full emancipation of women.

CHAPTER IX

HOSTAGES TO HURRY

The spirit of hurry which dominates both leaders and followers in the militant movement has been justified against attack with much earnest argument. The chief claims advanced are historical, and a reference to the long years of patient effort for which the Women's Suffrage Societies have been responsible since 1867 is supposed to fully answer any charges of undue haste brought against the modern movement. On the surface of things this record supplies every justification, and, paradoxical as this may sound, if it had been urged in 1885 instead of in 1905 such justification would have been fundamental as well as superficial.

The special work to which the older Suffrage Societies devoted themselves was the work of creating a majority sufficient to pass a suffrage measure. As I have shown elsewhere, it completed this task in the early 'eighties of last century; at this time it had created its voting machine. When in 1884 a Women Suffrage Amendment was moved to the Reform Bill there would have been no doubt whatever as to its success if this voting machine had been allowed to work. But the suffragists had reckoned without the Government, which, in the person of Mr. Gladstone and the chief engineer, stepped in and stopped the machine. This was the moment for the revolt; and upon the heels of revolt should have come changed tactics, based upon the recognition of the responsibility of the Government for the defeat.

There can be no doubt but that at this period very general support of the suffrage demand existed in the country. The records reveal a series of great meetings, extraordinary for that period, branches and committees even in the smallest towns of Scotland, which the

modern movement has not yet retouched, and resolutions in favour from municipal authorities and other responsible administrative bodies. The failure of the suffragists of that day to strike when the blow was necessary, and their further failure to develop a new policy to meet the conditions which Mr. Gladstone's action revealed, threw them back into impotence. They were in a blind alley. They went on building up a majority that had failed them, that continued to fail them, and that they could not trust. They remained in the blind alley for twenty years; and during that twenty years the movement lost heart and courage, drooped and pined, until it was a dead simulacrum of the thing it once had been. During those twenty years the contemptuous indifference of the politician hardened into a habit. He came to regard the suffrage question as a perennial. He judged it by its methods and by its effects, and in a great measure he was not to be blamed for accepting it at its own valuation.

These facts change the position materially. When suffragists count up the years of effort

and agitation they ought honourably to admit that twenty of those years were wasted by their own incapacity—that the living vital agitation had only existed during the earlier days, and that the dead period before militancy was more due to the suffragists themselves than to the politicians.

When the militant movement began it was therefore face to face not only with the ordinary political atmosphere of inaction and the common masculine sense of objection at first sight to Votes for Women, but it had to leap barriers which the older suffragists had erected. It had to create a new spirit in women themselves and a new Parliamentary atmosphere on the suffrage question. It had to re-convert numbers of old adherents and to reform and re-marshal its army. And while these needs called for vigour and attack and sacrifice, the very fact of their existence called for thoroughness and depth, for a guarding against bias and against over-much impatience. It was necessary to awaken the sense of urgency; but to guard against the demon of hurry. It was necessary to reject

the patience that meant inaction, and to guard against the impatience that meant ill-action.

The militant movement made no attempt to grasp the necessity for this discrimination. It was carried over the line of urgency into hurry, over the line of personal sacrifice into the sacrifice of principles and liberty and essentials. It refused to acknowledge facts and conditions or to allow for them, clamouring, "It ought not to be"; it refused to believe in what was. It will be argued that no limits to hurry could be desirable whatever the attitude of the country because of the stress of industrial oppression from which women were suffering. But this argument can not be urged in justification of speed-mongering which sacrificed the working woman and the advocacy of her rights as one of the primary hostages given for early success. Further, it is incontrovertible that this movement for the suffrage solution of industrial evils did not come from the women workers but from women of higher economic grade. And in the third place a slower, bigger, and more outspoken movement alone would

have had any chance of appeal to the women who are industrially enslaved. From the present movement of hurry they are excluded in great measure by class prejudice, by the expense and slowness of organisation, and because of the fact that their working conditions deny them any leisure for voluntary service, any power of adding to the funds and any opportunity of sharing in militant action.

The spirit of hurry has its rise more in the temperament of the chief leader than in any reasons of historical happenings or industrial stress. The chief characteristic of Mrs. Pankhurst is what has been described as her "divine impatience." She is alive with it. It has sides that are glorious and inspiring enough to justfy the description. It has sides that are anything but glorious. But it is this spirit of unresting haste that has carried the movement into the shoals that are ever ready for the feet of the restless rusher. I believe that each new sacrifice to this spirit in possession has caused Mrs. Pankhurst a pang. But the sacrifices have been made. One by one,

steadily, as they were demanded, the hostages have been forthcoming. To one convinced of the need for urgency and possessed of the spirit of unrest the sacrifices have appeared as the lesser evils. Autocracy was preferable to delay; a restriction of demand was preferable to delay; convention and narrowness and intolerance were less objectionable than delay; and in turn each of these prices was paid. A daring advertising scheme will always produce quicker results than revolution. Revolution frightens people, and must ever be of slow growth; but a picturesque policy of publicity, especially when it is carefully allied with otherwise impeccable propriety, is capable of raising a mushroom movement in a very short space of time. The pageant fever is almost a universal one. It brings satisfaction to the colour hunger and the histrionic aspirations of humanity. It is always easier to arouse the senses than to arouse the soul; and for this speedier result the militancy of effect has been preferred.

By women under the influence of the hurry spirit interference is resented not only because

it will lessen personal glory, but because by introducing other points of view it will introduce the need for longer considerations of decision and action—it will cause delay. To those not so influenced and less self-opinionated the very fact that there was danger to the rate of advance of the movement in a representative system would have raised the fear that the desired rate of advance might be artificial, and as such ultimately dangerous to the movement itself. It might have suggested also the possibility that there were more ways than one of achieving a given purpose and that it was never wise to reject unheard all other ways but one's own.

This policy of hurry must be judged by its effects not upon laws and law-makers alone but upon the women. In the beginning militancy made promise of leading women out of the land of bondage, but if I am asked now whether women will be the better in themselves for the militant movements I must answer a reluctant "No." Here and there are women who will be better, but for the mass the influences are bad. The very virtues

of the movement have become dangerous to women; it is sapping their independence, their self-control, their scorn of small and dishonest things. It is blinding their eyes with passion and devotion. It is making them into tools. As a result of the system of autocracy great numbers of the militant women have ceased thinking, have ceased to feel the need for thinking, have become mere receptive vessels. Unstimulated and armed by original thought their advocacy is marked by crudity and ignorance. Half the suffragette speakers one hears reveal an amazing barrenness of matter and an utter lack of individual ratiocination. They repeat parrot-wise the speeches of other speakers. They make use of statements of which they do not know the origin and of which they cannot supply the proof. In the political world they play the game of follow-the-leader; into the woman's position in other wide areas of human endeavour they have never been guilty of investigation. The jumble of economics and assumptions, of social facts and fancies, they repeat because they have

learnt them by heart, just as they have picked up the smart platform retorts and illustrations with which the original group of speakers arrested the attention of their audiences.

Take the methods of political trickery which are now so consistently applied. Do they tend to produce a higher type of woman? We know that they do not. The petty vices of women who live in restricted circumstances and to whom the wider worlds of education and public life are closed have formed a theme for numberless illogical tirades against the nature of woman. This movement of over-hurry is bringing those vices into politics. It is developing capacities of equivocation and boasting and disregard for the exact observance of truth. It is falsifying even at the time of utterance the commonly urged claims, not the essential ones or the logical ones, but the claims of sentiment that are popularly employed as to the advisability of enfranchising women.

One of the glib retorts favoured by the suffragette speaker to the "man in the crowd" who asks why she prefers politics to

the seclusion of home life is that women are needed in the political world. She would be a brave woman who would dispute this claim; but it can be used and supported in a very undesirable way. The customary line of argument is that politics needs the purification that women alone can bring, and the home is quoted as an exemplar of what ought to be in the political world. This dragging in of the home is often a platform trick employed to awaken sentimentality in the audience, but it is as often a proof of the crude and limited rebellion that has been kindled by suffragette methods. The home of to-day is commonly far from perfect. From its evil traditions of women's subjection and inferiority come some of the worst of our social and economic evils. The suffragette who is content with the home as it is, built upon the subjection of the woman and continued by the infringement of the rights of the child, is not a true rebel but the victim of superficial emotion. Any woman who is really a rebel longs to destroy the conventions which bind her in the home as much as those

which bind her in the State. She wants a new home and a new motherhood and a great many more new things as well as a Parliamentary vote. The waters of purification she seeks must flow through the home as well as through the political world. Yet the present conditions are such that the suffragettes who know these truths suppress them for political motives and those who ought to know them are left to blunder in the shallows of superficial things.

The claim that women will purify politics may be advanced from many points of view. It is often based merely upon the old sickly sentiment that has survived from the days when men in search of self-approval promulgated the angel-idiot theory. There are suffragists who claim that women have a higher moral nature than men, and who will accept any statement, however extreme, based upon that assumption. But while these premises are ridiculous and inadequate, there is something to be said for the theory that if a sex has been kept cleaning and scrubbing and scouring and sweeping for a long series of

generations, there will be a tendency for the habit to assert itself when that sex secures a wider sphere of existence. From this point of view I have often suggested the theory. The early history of the suffrage movement, and the strange detachedness of the women's party organisations from those of the men, have confirmed the view. The twenty years which elapsed between the last Reform Bill and the first outbreak of militancy and showed the older suffragists as totally incapable of grappling with the political machine, showed also that this failure was due to their unswerving belief in the honesty of their professed friends and their inability to play any of the ordinary political tricks. But the militant movement has changed all this. The modern suffragist is not only acquainted with the dishonest philandering of the politician, she has proved herself capable of meeting him at his own game. She has read him like a book, and then played off all his best tricks. She can talk large or small, according to the need of the moment, as he does; threaten and complain without a change of colour; snatch

credit from accident and read special meanings into ordinary events in order to serve her turn. Like the male politician, she can rouse an audience by the use of great phrases, raise the cry of "Equality" to win enthusiasm, applause, and sacrifice, and then cut down her official demand from principle to present expediency. She herself is disproving her own claim. She is losing her own self-respect in that she knows that she is urging a claim that is false.

The misuse of militancy as a medium of advertisement points in the same direction. It shows that women in politics are as easily corrupted as men by the desire to win. The scoring of showy and effective victory is so magnified as to undermine the very object which the victory is required to achieve. The devotees of militantism under the Pankhurst flag have become devotees of the big drum. And militantism is but one arm of the advertising octopus which is feeding upon the spirit of revolt and purification, and gradually eating it out of the movement. Noise and show have come to be the accepted substitutes

for argument. Government by suggestion has superseded personal conviction. The impetus of emotion and numbers has taken the place of reason. The woman's boasted standard of morals in public life has come down to the standard that she has so loudly condemned. She has employed all the under-influence, all the stage illusions, all the little vices, all the great blind virtues, to carry her through the maze. The respectable classes have been won—and paid for. The treasury has been filled—by sacrifice of devious kinds. Some people have given out of their abundance for the great show and shouting, and they are adequately repaid. But others have given out of their necessities because of the misused language of revolt, because of the souls to be won from captivity, and these must be counted among the many exploited by a movement that has no scruple about the methods it uses to gain its ends. The woman with money, the woman with courage, the woman with talent, the woman with leisure, the woman with warm life-forces pulsing through her, arresting and attractive, the

woman who has made her name, the lady with relatives in high places, the lady with a title—all these have been made use of as pawns in the game. They are all means to an end; tools to be used and forgotten; agencies to serve their purpose and drop out of sight. They regard themselves as patrons, heroines, rebels, and emancipators; they are really the instruments of advertisement used by a great machine of boom. These are some of the strange manifestations of the great purification which women have brought into politics! And all these accomplished facts, all these resulting forces, have been forming the environment of the militant women for years and have been moulding and bending her. She has become the creature and the slave of the speed-mongers. She has been losing herself with every step by which she has approached nearer the legislative goal.

One of the most dangerous influences that have been brought to bear upon her has been that of sex opinionation. The old sinful humility which was inculcated in women is gradually giving way to an assertion of

individual and sex value, and to a claim for respect and recompense in the world. This is a tendency to be encouraged. The first thing a girl-child should be taught to say to her brother is this: "I am as good as you," but the second is: "Of course, I don't claim to be any better." The militant movement has definitely encouraged its supporters to act as though they believed that women were the superiors of men. It has encouraged a system of stupid sex-glorification. The future is referred to with capital letters as The Woman's Age, and language is employed of which the only inference is that in the glorious coming days man will be as much repressed and discriminated against as woman is now.

In a small way this pro-woman spirit may be a good thing—for men—very young men. In special cases, and where the mental machinery is of such quality as to make the effort worth while, this attitude may prove useful in reducing a foolish young man to reason. But the world is not full of foolish sex-opinionated young men, and it will make

things no better to fill it with foolish sex-opinionated young women. There is every justification for the woman who runs amok under masculine provocation; there is everything to be said for the steady cultivation in women of a high respect for their own functions and capacities and a belief in themselves; but there is no permanent satisfaction to be obtained by casting man down and asking woman to tread upon him. To reverse an evil condition is not to remove it. The cultivation of distrust in all men because they are men is as evil as the cultivation of contempt for all women because they are women. But there is danger as well as evil in this course of action. Women who are taught to worship women and scorn men are liable to go too far in the opposite direction when under the influence of strong natural emotion. If you have been subjected to a system of mental control under which you have come to regard the average human male as an inferior and evilly-inclined creature, you are in danger of mistaking the first intelligent and honest man you meet for a god. The

element of deceit in the canonisation of woman at the expense of man provides a channel for the further degradation of women. This may be regarded as of slight account by the suffragist who needs the infatuated woman in the frenzied rush for legislation, but it will become a large thing when the calm of quieter days gives opportunity for marking its effects.

By such forces are women turned into sexual prigs. By such means are they being prepared for legislative liberty. By such means is the personal emancipation of the individual woman being retarded and sacrificed. The subjection of the individual woman, in her person, in her mind, to any outer force, the infringement of her individual integrity, the degradation of her outlook and aspirations, all these are much more disastrous in effect than mere legislative disabilities. Legal and formal disabilities are chiefly objectionable in that they tend to produce the evil of personal subjection. A woman can be free in spite of law and apart from law; the law can only give her the chance

to be free. No passing of legal enactments can set free a woman with a slave mind. No one can be made free by machinery. The machinery can only provide the opportunity.

The price paid to speed-mongering mounts up higher and higher as every fresh aspect of the movement is considered. The whole movement now is honeycombed with exploitation. With one of the strongest cases that could possibly be desired by reformers, with material of the best offered for use, with great human potentialities urgent for outlet, with the qualities of great leaders in themselves, the whole of the better things have been sold or cast away by the dictators for the mere satisfaction of a speedy end of some sort. One used to hear thinking women express the fear that the struggle would end too soon and the great cleansing forces of revolt have too short a time to work. The fear is now that the movement has already lasted too long. It has lasted long enough to lose sight of its great end, long enough to create new evils, and long enough to sow seeds of many weaknesses and limits among

the women whom it might have freed. It has lasted long enough to impose another slavery for that which it has not yet removed.

CHAPTER X

CLAIMS EXAMINED

EXTRAVAGANT claims on behalf of militancy will be brought forward to counterbalance the charges I bring. I want to say at once that I am not prepared to admit anything like all of them, although I have no desire to belittle the effect of what will amount to a national acceptance of the principle of sex-equality. But the claims made cannot be granted without consideration.

Militancy has hastened the day of the first legislative victory. I believe this now; I could have staked my life on it a few months ago. But the return of militancy in November, 1910, has raised up fears as to whether the present undoubted advantage will be permanently retained. If it is, if the sacrifice of

the past is not bartered for revenge in the immediate future, women will have votes, some women of those at present qualified, at an earlier day than would otherwise have been the case unless some other extraordinary change had come over the suffrage movement in the interval. This must be frankly admitted as a good claim.

I do not wish to be understood as indulging in unqualified prophecy. The recent breaking of the truce which had given Mr. Brailsford and his Conciliation Committee a chance of focussing the results of our work inside the House was ominous. The demonstrations at the Dissolution brought to an immediate end the negotiations with the authorities. They indicated that the desire for retaliation threatens to outrun even the desire for early results. And this way lies the danger of postponed legislation. But the admission of the effects of militancy on hastening suffrage legislation does not necessarily imply that the right use has been made of the militant spirit and machinery, or that the best possible result has been or will be

achieved even in the political world. I am of opinion that the legislative victory could have been won only a little later than will now be the case had another guiding spirit been substituted for that which has been employed, and that instead of the way being paved with sacrifice the wider interests could have been royally served at the same time.

But let the claim of hastening legislation be admitted. It is not certain that the results predicted for women will follow. The prophecies of protagonists with regard to the effects of legislation are generally over-rosy. They are made without full recognition of the British capacity for accepting at one and the same time a hotch-potch of contradictory laws and principles and refusing to follow out to its logical conclusion any course of thought.

Nor will the absence of co-relation in British legislation and the untidy conservative methods of the British people be the sole influences which will limit their extravagant expectations. Their own methods, their own rush, will serve to reduce the value of the vote when it is won. The vote cannot secure

of itself any single woman's emancipation. It is a tool; and the kind of work that can be done with it depends upon the nature of the tool, and second upon the capacity of the person who uses it. Both these conditions seem to have been forgotten by the militant apologists. They fail to see that large areas in which emancipation is needed lie entirely outside the scope of the vote. They forget that a slave woman with a vote will still be essentially a slave. They do not recognise that the woman with a restricted outlook can only express herself within its limits; and that the crude shallowness, sex-opinionation, and resentment, which forms the basis of their enthusiasm, do not supply the best training for the serious work of emancipation by law-making. The frenzied rush for votes is not carrying women more deeply into the problems that confront them; it is carrying them over the top. Facts and figures, serious investigation, considerations of principle and consistency, these are all foreign to the atmosphere of hurry. The future law-maker would be the better for a period of calm.

But any real legislative advance for women must be based on aspiration after a re-created world. This will necessitate that the enfranchised women, the users of the voting tool shall be possessed of those aspirations and capable of carrying them into practical acceptance. If we look at the body of women who form the suffragist rank and file we find that any hopes based upon the assumption that they are advanced feminists craving to use the vote in the interest of womanhood are doomed to disappointment.

The consistent believers in the complete emancipation of women do not form a large proportion of the suffragists' rank and file. The greater number of suffragists are of the political variety, and many of these have very limited aspirations. Those women who claim equal rights and are eager to accept the full burdens which sex equality must bring are the promise of the whole movement. But they are submitting to a policy of avoidance of fundamentals, a policy of suppression, which must be an ill-preparation for the future. I do not speak lightly in this matter.

I have had the evasion and hypocrisy forced upon myself. I have quibbled with questioners. I have spoken on the edge of self-committal and held myself back. I have found myself under the influence of the audience I addressed whittling down what I should have said into what I knew was as much as I dared to say. Such evasion has become a habitual use in the movement. The forces that would make for the best kind of legislation, which would prepare the future elector to destroy and to construct with knowledge and insight, are dammed up at their source; they are sacrificed for a mere temporary advantage.

The women for whose sake the chains of silence are imposed are merely out for the parliamentary vote, preferably upon the present or a narrower basis. They want the vote because they rightly object to the sense of personal degradation which is involved in its denial. The matter is purely a personal one to them; their clamour for change will cease as soon as the personal indignity is removed. There is no revolutionary zeal in this large class; in politics and social and sexual affairs

it will stand for things as they are. Between the narrow personal and political suffragists and the true feminists there stands a second much smaller class of women who would accept some such programme of reform as that embodied by Lady McLaren in her Woman's Charter. But while accepted in spirit even this moderate and in some suggestions retrogressive programme is considered too advanced to be advocated in public. It has been neglected and pushed aside by all the suffragist associations, and the militant societies have been the worst offenders. A similar attitude has been maintained on other occasions. It is deserving of note that neither of the militant groups sent any representative to give evidence before the Divorce Commission, and that when, in 1908, Mrs. Despard took up the case of Daisy Lord, there was no other prominent suffragist who shared her advocacy, while much disapproval of the intrusion of such a matter into suffrage propaganda was expressed, not by the high-and-dry conservative ladies, but by the "advanced." The re-creation of the world

by legislative means does not seem likely while these types of women predominate, and the forces at work leave them uneducated and undeveloped.

To the credit of militancy must be counted the general awakening of interest in the question of women's right to self-government. The revolt has brought many people into active touch with the question who would not otherwise have heard of it so soon or in such a startling and stimulating way. It has provided elementary education upon the issue of women's citizenship to the general public. This claim is irrefutable. It can claim further to have brought women into associated service in a rough-and-ready way which has not been wanting in developing social qualities and powers of co-operation. But while in the Freedom League this training has tended to the production of thinking and questioning co-operation, in the Women's Social and Political Union it has produced the subservient self-abnegation of the individual. The movement may claim, too, to have aided in a remarkable degree the development of

self-sacrifice and personal courage among women.

Herein lies its greatest value. This particular work has been well done, and done in spite of the rampant evils which have accompanied it. To this it is clear that the militants can always turn to substantiate their claim of having helped onward the development of a free womanhood. The wonderful forces of sacrifice which have been awakened are such as to stamp the women capable of them as greater than their methods, greater than their speech. If to the courage that has risen above fear and laughter and contempt there were but added a statesmanship as big, the movement would have achieved its glorious work in a glorious fashion. The dream would have become a reality. But the contemplation of this very courage, misused and misdirected, is one of the most pitiful of sights. Not only in applying militant tactics is this quality of courage manifested; it has risen to as great heights in the performance of the numerous kinds of dirty and unpleasant work which active suffragettes always find ready for their hands.

Ages of self-suppression and the yielding up of self have developed this capacity in women to such an extent as to make a vice out of a virtue. Woman has not only failed to assert her own right to consideration, her right to be herself, she has given herself away, and given herself away for nothing. The militant movement, while asserting the woman's right to political liberty, has only continued the cultivation of this spirit of self-sacrifice. It has not only exploited the divine thing. It has continued its degradation. The only consoling reflection is that self-forgetfulness has been provided with an avenue of courage in place of the old-time avenue of suppression. This is an advance. It will bear fruit when the evils of emotionalism and hurry have been lived down.

When all the claims are admitted and examined we are driven to one conclusion. Whatever great forces the militant movement awakened at the beginning it is now doing more harm than good. Even the value of the vote as the tool of legislative emancipation has been steadily sacrificed to the getting of

the vote. The great inheritance of woman is being paid away for the political mess of pottage; and this is robbed of half its practical use and value by the policy and atmosphere in which women are being trained. Only the real feminists can put an end to the worst aspects of this suicidal frenzy for results; but they have allowed themselves to be blinded by emotion and carried off their feet by numbers; they have given themselves to the game of boastful, arrogant hurry and let it go on unchecked. They have refused to see that they are tying their own hands against the future; that as the first cry of urgency has been used, so will the second and third be used to silence and chain them in the same way; that ever they will be selling the great whole for the little immediate part and robbing that part of its great value by dishonest suppression.

These are the dangers. It is for those who are truly rebel women to leave them so or alter them.

CHAPTER XI

THE BROKEN TRUCE

In every movement towards freedom there has come an occasion that called for revolt. It came in the British Woman Suffrage movement; and after a pause of years, in which the movement nearly died for lack of it, the call was responded to. Whatever evils of administration have restricted it, whatever opportunities and greatnesses it has missed, the revolt has prepared the way for legislation giving votes to women.

But with the suffragist advocates of revolt militancy has come to be regarded not as a necessary means to the end but as the only means. Now militancy can never be this. The masterly generalship of the greatest military conquerors has not alone sufficed to

win victory. It is obvious that the last stage before amnesty or legislation must be one of negotiation and peace. This is especially the case when the position of the rebels is such that they cannot themselves focus upon the political machine the forces which they employ. The very fact that women are voteless and have no representatives in Parliament leaves a gap between their achievement and the full record of them which does not exist for rebel groups of men.

To the thinking rebel of the early days of this movement this fact was clear. On many occasions we protested amongst ourselves against the waste of our work, and sought for some means of bridging the gap. We felt that although we had shown numbers and energy and determination we had failed to record them within the House of Commons. "How long this stage will last, we do not know," we said. "But before we win we must get an organised vehicle of expression within the citadel. The last stage must be conducted through friends within. We may not like it. Being rebels we cannot like it.

But the circumstances render it inevitable. The last stage will be a stage of truce."

When in January, 1910, both militant societies called a truce, and Mr. Brailsford and Lord Lytton gathered together a group of parliamentarians to form a Conciliation Committee, strong hopes sprang into being. For four years we had been in revolt. Now the time for focussing and recording our work had come. Step by step the Government had been brought nearer to leaving the way of legislation open. With a band of representatives working in the House the last stage looked imminent.

Militancy had prepared the way for the conciliatory efforts, but the two could not go on together. One cannot be treating with the enemy and waging war upon him at the same time. If the work of conciliation and inquiry, if the practical preparation for a practicable measure were to go on, the active aggression must cease. To this agreement both militant societies held fast, and the work within the House was pushed forward with enthusiasm, earnestness, and ability.

Our own work, interpreted by the occasional intervention of suffragist members of Parliament in the interests of legislation and peace, had brought the Prime Minister stage by stage from his original personal objection of the votes for women demand to the stage of officially speaking us fair. It was at this moment that Mr. Brailsford's committee took up the task of finding the basis upon which the House would record a majority for a Woman Suffrage Bill and then bringing the Government to remove its veto out of deference to that majority. This work occupied the parliamentary time during the spring and autumn of 1910, and I believe that it would have resulted certainly in the passing of a Votes for Women measure during 1911 if the consitutional issue had not created a crisis. Even still I am convinced, writing before the King's Speech has been read, that a careful husbanding of the advantages already gained could be made to result in early enfranchisement.

Before the Dissolution was announced in November the officials of the Conciliation

Committee cherished strong hopes that they would be able to win from the Government a definite pledge of full facilities for this present year. The announcement of the Dissolution had reduced in value the pledge they obtained before it was finally uttered. But there is no shadow of doubt but that it would have been given in either event, and that it was not merely a pre-election pledge intended to remove suffragist opposition during the contest.

Yet before the Government had replied to the request for an undertaking—and although it had fixed a day on which it would reply—as soon as the Dissolution was announced, the truce was broken. I do not deny cause for disappointment. Could any woman in the ranks fail to feel that when the constitutional issue postponed our own settlement? But I do deny that any justification existed for a return to militancy. To demonstrate at this critical juncture was to demonstrate against accident. It was a childish, a wasteful, and an ungrateful proceeding. It was kicking against the general cussedness of things, before which individuals, and much more movements, have

to learn philosophy. Neither the Government nor the Conciliation Committee were so far blameworthy as to justify the return to the tactics of protest. The Government had not deliberately chosen to rush the constitutional question, and to dissolve the House, in order to betray the suffragist women of the country. Only the exaggeration habitual to the militant movement could persuade anyone to believe that.

When it came, the Prime Minister's statement was the best that has ever been made by a responsible Minister of the Crown. But before the pledge was given the militant tactics had been resumed. And this course I think was a policy of suicide. It showed that the rebel leaders were not statesmen; it showed that they were determined to demonstrate, that they were determined not to be satisfied. The year of waiting had left them more enamoured of militancy than ever. They had begun to feel the need for the advertisement that it supplied. When the constitutional issue between the two Houses came to sweep the country into a General

Election they rose up crying, "We will not be ignored. The constitutional issue between the two sexes also claims attention." But the issue was ignored. Such demonstration at such a time did not prevent the swamping. It could not prevent it. The promoters knew that it could not. They wasted powder and shot and women; and they wasted them to get an advertisement for the General Election.

But the demonstration was not so harmless as it was useless. I believe that it prejudicially affected the minds of retiring members and parliamentary candidates just at the moment when their opinions were of most importance to suffragists. I believe that it affected the attitude of the Prime Minister. His pose, when he made the statement, was described as careless, the words studiously brief and off-hand; and it is remarkable that though a Government statement had been promised for this day it was not forthcoming until at a late hour, and then only after it had been specially asked for. I believe that the demonstration of November 18th prejudiced the chances of early suffrage legislation.

I do not suggest that the Prime Minister's statement called for gratitude. But I hold that in the first place it should have been waited for before it was rejected; it should have been heard before it was condemned. And when it was made it certainly called for a continuance of the truce with regard to militancy so that the work of negotiation could be continued and as much got out of the pledge as the most enthusiastic Liberal suffragist could read into it. It is my conviction that this could have been done, that it was within the realm of the possible. But almost before the pledge was uttered another demonstration took place—a thing justifiable enough if it was absolutely certain that nothing more could be won from the Government by negotiation, and a course absolutely absurd and criminal while it was clear that such opportunities still existed.

The demonstrations of November 18th and 22nd were also objectionable in that they showed ungrateful distrust of the Conciliation Committee. I am not concerned to defend the individual members of this body;

some of these men are too well-known as staunch suffragists to need any defence from me, and of the rest it must be said that they had loyally supported the efforts of their colleagues. But I do strongly resent the action which was calculated to throw a slur upon this Committee, and especially upon its earnest and unresting Secretary and Chairman. They will be the last to protest on their own behalf, but that does not make the rejection of their efforts any the more excusable. They still hoped to achieve full victory, and their earlier achievements within the House showed that their hope was entitled to be treated as reasonable. Either their honesty of purpose or their capacity or both were called in question by the November demonstrations.

Now a movement of this kind cannot remain stationary. It may remain too long or too short a time in one stage, but when that stage is ended it must step onward or backward. If the stage of conciliation has really failed then it follows that the type of militancy employed to prepare the way for it has failed too, and the next stage ought to be a

more vigorous one. The responsibility this implies for the leaders is enormous. It means that they, having rejected the methods of negotiation are committed in honour to prove that negotiation had done its best and had failed. If they cannot do this—and it is obvious from their over-hasty demonstration of November 18th that they cannot—it follows that they must bear the responsibility of rejecting conciliation before it has been fully tried, of thrusting the movement back into the stage of violence, and of doing this not because it is proved necessary, but because they desired it. This is the only thing that it can mean.

Even as I write the preliminary vague threatenings of more violent action are being circulated through the Press. Before this book is published the first appeal to real violence may have been made. It may not be the real thing, of course. One scarcely expects that it will be more than a spectacular imitation. But whether it be real or sham it will condemn a large number of women to personal sacrifice that in some cases amounts to

suicide, and in all cases to the suffering of terrible strain and much possible abuse. The leaders repudiate responsibility for any acts of violence committed by their followers. But this magnifies their offence a thousandfold, makes it monstrous, cowardly, and untruthful. Women who have been worked up to fanaticism by years of influence are now to be given rein, but the sins of their befoolment are to be upon their own heads, and those who made them fanatics are to escape. This is the pitiable spectacle as it appears to the public. But to those who know the facts the position is worse. Violence under these conditions is not only vindictive and unnecessary, it is victimisation.

I must make this as clear as crystal and as strong as I know how, for in it lies the cause of my final disillusionment. In brief it can be put thus: There was a chance of peace, and these leaders have cast it away. They have thrown away, rejected, a possible early and peaceable solution. This, in all conscience, is bad enough. But it becomes a deed that calls for a vocabulary stronger than

mine at its strongest when the significance of the return to militancy is marked. For it does not mean a return to militancy of the old type; it is certain to mean a return to more aggressive forms of protest and attack. In plain English the directors of the Social and Political Union have deliberately chosen to fling away the strength and nerve force, the physical health and perhaps the mental health, of the women who have been trustful enough to leave their destinies in such hands. They have chosen to repeat scenes that they would have us believe they have always viewed with loathing, as the last alternative to a servile submission. They have chosen to destroy their own followers. Do not let any supporters of these leaders talk to me again of the iniquities of the Government. Here is iniquity enough for me.

Let me be understood. I have myself urged that in any living revolt the failure of peaceful negotiation must mean stronger revolt. I know that it must. Everyone who reads history will admit that it must mean either more vigorous revolt or submission.

It is not for the application of more vigorous tactics in itself that I am constrained to condemn in unsparing terms the directorate of the Social and Political Union. I am not afraid of violence. I do not condemn it. I have advocated it. But with the last five years of petty partisan militancy behind us I found that I could not honestly or fairly apply it. If the record of the last five years had been different the position of to-day would be different, and a refusal of early legislation might justify violence completely. But the folly of the militancy of advertisement is that it has queered the pitch. An independent society like the Freedom League is not able to conduct its war with the Government upon fair and sane lines while its every effort and intention may be frustrated by the precipitation of the sister society. How can the revolutionist use violent methods of protest against the Government which obviously has been forced into a false position by the criminal impatience of fellow rebels? How can I attack the Government for the delays occasioned by the Social and Political Union?

It is not violence that I condemn; it is the precipitation of a movement that promised to end in peace back into violence. This I condemn, and I will continue to condemn. It is a policy of wrecking, the deliberate choice of delay and warfare. I know that it will be lightly said that the Government would have out-manœuvred the Conciliation Committee in the end. But I demand proof. It is not right to hang a woman because you believe that she would some day have murdered her husband. It is not right to commit any act of retaliation before the deed against which you retaliate is done. You cannot revenge yourself upon suspicion. To do so is to be guilty of wanton outrage.

I have already said that I hold no brief for the Government. But neither will I appear as devil's advocate against it. The Government has sins of magnitude upon its head. It has been pushed forward from stage to stage of concession like a reluctant bully yielding always under pressure. But on this last occasion it has not been given a fair chance. It could plead "Not guilty." But

I am much more concerned for the deed itself than either for the Government denied its chance or for the Conciliation Committee flouted and cast aside. It is the deed itself that condemns the militant directorate.

I would have stayed in the movement to the end, struggled against Fate, and suppressed my convictions for the sake of unity and peace, striving ever for an early solution, if this final criminal folly had not made it impossible. Under the revelation it forced upon me the need for speech became imperative. The dangerous strength of the self-made leaders loomed up imminent and destructive, and silence made me accessory to the evil. Whatever the price to be paid for speech I had to speak. The movement had been betrayed. Find what extenuation you can, you who worship and follow, for you cannot deny the fact: the movement *has* been betrayed. Divine impatience has outrun its divine attributes; it has made a stupendous blunder. In the rebellion against this blunder the whole movement stands forth to be judged.

CHAPTER XII

PARNELL THE PROTOTYPE

It would be folly to pretend that the women capable of directing and dominating this movement are common-place women, women endowed with only the average share of gifts. Both Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter are women of striking personality. They are not necessarily women of wide culture nor of great intellectual power, but they are mentally alert and temperamentally tenacious, they have absolute confidence in themselves and in their methods, and they possess in a remarkable degree the capacity for winning the unreasoning worship of others. They are both of them feminine women, and women who rejoice in their femininity. They are women who are feminine in the popular sense

of the word, women of slight physique and considerable physical charm, in whom some of the prevailing characteristics of the subject women of past days are still marked. This is especially true of Mrs. Pankhurst, who is by far the more human of the two, the more natural, the closer to the hearts of her followers.

The woman of other days was proverbially variable; so are these women in small things—in the things that they think are great they have perfect steadiness of purpose. But their steadiness is not always the steadiness of wisdom; it is sometimes the expression of folly. They will not admit the human facility for making mistakes; they are never wrong; they never give way. They are not calm women, but irritable, yielding to sudden tempests; they believe what they want and reject what they do not want to believe; they like and dislike by instinct and chance circumstance, and change rapidly from one state to the other; they act on the spur of sudden feeling and unthinkingly, but they can always make a justification that sounds

sufficient to give the action reasonable basis within a few moments after it has been committed. Perhaps because Mrs Pankhurst is more frank and self-revealing than her daughter these characteristics are more marked in her. But while the younger woman may show her limits less often in speech the elder woman is the more lovable. She is natural, herself, a wonderful woman, self-inspired, possessed with the spirit of hurry and impatience, paying any price her aims demand but paying every price with a pang, unscrupulous in that she will not bate one jot or tittle of the price, human and appealing in that she regrets the payment and sorrows over it.

Miss Christabel Pankhurst is of harder stuff, not greater. The mother is a natural product, the daughter an artificial one. She might have done her work better if she had been herself. She has schooled herself to a pose, formed herself upon a model, and fitted herself to the mould the model supplied.

Angry Irishmen have been incensed that the policy of the Women's Social and Political Union should be described as an application

of the tactics of Parnell, while Irish suffragists have been flattered by the description. But no one seems to have grasped how very deeply, considering the difference of circumstances and material, the influence of Parnell can be traced. The idea of an organised militant campaign directed against the Government was not the fruit of any single brain. Some parts of the policy evolved under our eyes as we worked. Some parts were directly attributable to Miss Pankhurst in their final form. Some parts must be left to conjecture as to origin. But even a cursory examination of the history of Charles Stewart Parnell establishes the fact that the militant suffragists have paid him the compliment of more than ordinary imitation.

There were two centres in Manchester in either of which the idea of a militant campaign might have originated, the Pankhurst household and another. I first heard the suggestion in the latter centre and may have been influenced thereby to believe this its place of origin. Because of political views and national sympathies Parnell would be

regarded with admiration in both centres, and there is little doubt in my mind, from my acquaintance with the conditions which preceded the militant outbreak, and from a consideration of the work and life of Parnell, that he was the inspirer of Miss Pankhurst, and that in a lesser degree his methods influenced her mother.

This influence of Parnell is traceable in the tactics and direction of the movement—in great things as well as in small, and it is traceable also in the personal attitude of Miss Pankhurst in a degree that cannot be explained except by the hypothesis of study and imitation. The parliamentary anti-government policy is the direct gift of the Irish Party under Parnell, although it had been previously practised by the Irish Nationalists of 1852 and preached by Sir Gavan Duffy. In this we admitted Parnell's influence from the beginning. But in addition to the direct policy of opposition or obstruction of the Government in power, the spirit in which the policy was applied is common to both movements. Parnell believed in angering

and shocking the enemy; so does Miss Pankhurst. Parnell rejoiced to think that he was hated by the English; it is one of the aims of the Pankhurst policy to awaken the hatred of the Liberals. The desire for retaliation as well as reform was strong in the one leader and is strong in the others. Parnell is reported by Mr. Barry O'Brien as saying in Dublin about 1879:

"I said when I was last here that I would not promise any thing by parliamentary action, nor by any particular line of policy; but I said that we could punish the English, and I predicted that the English would very soon get afraid of punishment." This is equalled by Miss Pankhurst's declarations that "We will bring the Government to its knees," and "The Government will be harassed in every possible way."

The parliamentary policy of obstruction is the same, and the employment of the forces of rebellion carries out the analogy. Mr. Barry O'Brien tells us that Parnell walked always upon the verge of treason-felony, but never by word or deed committed himself to it, and

he thus acquired an ominous weight in constitutional circles and a great measure of influence over the Fenian organisation at the same time. The militant suffragist leaders have had to fit this policy to different conditions. No rebel movement existed for them, it had to be created. They had to conduct a political agitation and at the same time combine with it the pose of revolution. They could not take the exact line of Parnell, a line which left him untouched by personal responsibility for lawlessness, but they chose the next best course. They talked revolution, but did not practise it; they walked on the verge of sedition and never committed themselves to it; they put out one hand to protest and another to propriety. In this way again they followed the policy of Parnell, playing off one section of people against the other, and exploiting to their own purposes the rebel forces that seethed round them.

It is said that Parnell was unscrupulous in his methods, that he looked only at the end, caring little how he got there. This is an

outstanding characteristic of the present militant movement. It has developed into ruthlessness and casuistry, it has created the methods of boom, it has bred the evils of government by autocracy and management by suggestion and dominance. The women who work with the militant dictators are used by them, and in this the militant practice resembles that of Parnell, who made all sections of the Irish people help to drive the ship for him. There is a similar resemblance to that attitude of Parnell, which called forth comment when he was presented with the great Tribute of the Irish people, in the regally calm way in which adoration and tribute are accepted by the autocrats of the militant movement. But like all other parallels, this breaks down if pushed too far, for to the policy of dictatorship which Parnell followed he brought the capacity to choose and develop men of ability—the other men grew in stature by working alongside of him—while in the militant movement the women of parts have been either looked at askance or suppressed.

The personal attitude of Miss Pankhurst

seems to follow in many important points that of Parnell, and a fairly long acquaintance with her leads me to think that these personal similarities are acquired. There is the same reticence which gave to Parnell so much of his strength, the silence about future work, the same evasion of the statement of a policy, the same aloofness. Parnell does not appear to have won the worship of the Irish at home and the support of the Irish in England and America by argument and explanation, but by the pose of self-assurance and silence. He never explained his policy. He merely asked for an opportunity to apply it. He justified it after the event. He was opposed to the publication of the Plan of Campaign, to anything which might serve as ground for criticism and promote the advocacy of alternative policies. "He was not in the habit of forecasting the future," says one of his biographers, "lest it should interfere with the operations of the present." Again: "He saw his way clearly to a given point; he went straight to that point and then surveyed the situation afresh."

This same faculty for silence and for non-committal utterances Miss Pankhurst exhibited in a marked degree in the early days of the women's militant movement. The women about her talked, but she said little except upon the platform. She seemed to stand by and let things drift and grow, and then to seize upon them and fit them in among those already accepted. She thrust her colleagues into new positions with the haziest of hints on policy, the bare bones of an idea upon which to work, and they came through gasping, sometimes right and sometimes wrong. These experiences led them to wonder if she evolved her ideas from hand to mouth as she went or built them up from the more facile speakers about her and from their experimental action. Either of these suggestions may fit the case, but a close acquaintanceship with the life and work of Parnell would have been sufficient explanation in itself. Such a knowledge of the Irish leader would have shown a woman as capable as Miss Pankhurst the advantages of careful non-committal advance, of retaining the

initiative as completely and as long as possible by a wise silence, of leading the women with her step by step a little at a time until they were committed to the whole policy she desired without opportunity for criticism of or initiative in its construction. This certainly was the practice and this the result. With the experiences of the last seven years as my guide I am strongly inclined to accept the theory that Miss Pankhurst carefully modelled her course from the beginning upon that of Charles Stewart Parnell.

In another relation the analogy is suggested only to break down. Parnell is admitted to have hesitated when Davitt suggested the formation of the Land League, and his hesitation was due to a recognition of the difficulty of controlling such organisations and the fear that the strength of this one might be so used as to interfere with his plans. But he took the risk and carried the Land League with him, while Mrs. Pankhurst, troubled with the same doubts, refused to take the risks and imposed the iron bonds of personal control upon the movement that she required and distrusted.

There is a common resemblance in the personal egotism of the Irish leader and the militant dictators. "Parnell believed that he was able to lead the Irish party, and that no other man could." Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter believe that they can lead the British suffrage movement and that no other women can. They go further: they say that no other women shall. Parnell could always have been displaced by the vote of his colleagues; Mrs. Pankhurst can never be so displaced; she has erected the wall of autocracy in order to make that event impossible.

A wonderful facility for quick decision, for instinctive choice of the right weapon, an adroitness that was almost marvellous, seems to have marked the "uncrowned king." There is nothing perhaps so specially marked in the two dictators than this same facility. Parnell could not be cornered: I have never seen Mrs. Pankhurst at a loss for an explanation or a retort; and her daughter has carried to a fine art the evasion of any issue that cannot be escaped in any other way.

So close does the duplication in personal

attitude and methods go that the very arguments of Parnell are employed by the younger militant leader. Parnell's speeches and the history of his life are full of phrases which are used by Miss Pankhurst and of descriptions that might be given of her. With a very few substitutions whole portions of Parnell's speeches could be accepted by her followers as Miss Pankhurst's utterances. Sometimes the very words re-appear. "We will stiffen the back of the Government. Then we shall see what the Lords will do," describes Miss Pankhurst's present attitude exactly.

"He called upon the Government to give assurances for legislation for the next session." Miss Pankhurst has been doing this ever since I have known her.

"Parnell made up his mind to wage relentless war upon the Government."

"Parnell never dreams of giving the English credit for good intentions. He is always on the look-out for the cloven hoof. He distrusts the whole lot of them, and is always on the watch."

The book of inspiration from which the spirit and policy of the militant movement have found direction is the "Life of Parnell." In the record of his rapid re-construction of the Irish party there has been found the methods of re-construction of the Women Suffrage Party. The likeness in many ways of the struggle that the Irish wage for self-government to the struggle which women wage for political liberty made the problem of adaptation easy after it had suggested the course of action. The militant leaders are the imitators of the Irish leader, but they have failed to attain his mastery of circumstance, his trust in his colleagues, his capacity for judgment. He did not only know how to conduct a campaign and make use of all the forces within his world to help him to his end; he knew more. He knew when to strike and when not to strike; they strike at all times. He knew how to trust men; they do not know how to trust women. He knew when the war was over and the time for negotiation had come; they have rejected negotiation when it has been offered. He

knew how to carry the country for which he worked with him; they have left behind them not only the women who are still unawakened but great classes of women who might have been wakened, and of those who were wishful of giving service they have cast some out of the ranks. He was the leader, the natural chief, the chosen, the master of circumstance; they are the autocrats self-made, the artificially created dictators. He deserved to win. I dare not ask, "Do they?"

CHAPTER XIII

LOOKING FORWARD

I STATED at the outset that my criticism would be merciless, and I do not pretend that it has not been. A defrauded rebel is naturally the bitterest opponent of leaders who exploit rebellion. And though I scorn to urge excuse I do urge justification. Speech was necessary. And one might as well have not spoken at all if one did not speak strongly. If upon later consideration I find that I am guilty of having spoken too strongly in the heat and depth of my resentment against the broken truce, I shall not be afraid of admitting my error. But at present, as I write, I feel that I have spoken as honestly as I can and as sympathetically as I dare.

I look forward to other hopes and other

work. I see the need for much hard thinking among women; I see the need for much plain speaking. I shall try to do my share of both. I do not think that the atmosphere of the militant movement, an atmosphere at fierce fever heat, has been good for me or for others. In such heat of struggle one cannot see straight. Outside this atmosphere we may begin again and build the foundations of our future work. I cannot prophesy where the new investigations may lead us, what the fruit of careful thought among the women who have to begin again will be, but I believe that there will come a mature movement, adult, strong, fully-grown, to which these women will contribute. I do not think that any such new movement will forge new chains as the price of winning particular liberties, but rather that it will set itself to prepare the way for full liberty. It is not possible for it to confine its attention to politics, even to the great portentous questions of women's connection with economics, nor to the much suppressed and difficult sex matters: though upon each of these issues it will prepare the

way by investigation and will take a strong and honest line. It cannot be an anti-man movement, but rather a movement to make possible supermen and superwomen. I believe. . . . But all these things are hopes, and may be dreams. I have dreamed before —and wakened.

The germ of the political virus is in the air. It is a mad, strange world, and we women are as mad as the rest of its inhabitants. Just when all the signs of the times point to the breakdown of Parliamentary systems, when the hollowness of the party sham, and the ineffectiveness of governing machinery is becoming impossible of denial, we find the new clamour set up by workers and women to get their rights in the political arena. If their getting them will mean a clean sweep of present ineptitudes and stupidities then we may hope much from their success—more from that of the Labour Party than from that of the women, for the way of Labour has been prepared while the women have sought to escape the burdens of preparation. But if this new incoming will merely continue and

perpetuate the political conditions of the present, then the earnest workers should be about their business elsewhere.

Great opportunities for the exercise of personal liberty can be attained by parliamentary means. But liberty in its widest aspects is always curtailed by legislation. There are two classes of legislation to consider: the one is carried by those who control the legislative machine, and this is imposition; the other is carried by the demand of the people, and this is only majority rule and not full liberty. In this second class the reforms women need would have to come. Yet nothing is ever attained in the class of legislation from a representative Parliament—and the more representative it becomes the nearer this rule approximates to absolute truth—unless it has been preached and promulgated throughout the country until the preachers have become weary and the demand itself trite.

This is a work that is waiting for us. By voice and pen to produce the change of spirit in men and women which will register itself in legislation and which will make for better

conditions in areas that legislation cannot reach. Before the bullets can be used by the politicians they must be made; before the women can get a thing they must want it. Let us go out and make them want things; let us show them the reasonableness and the justice of the things they already want but of which they have not dared to speak; and let us go seeking for the right outlet along the many ways that are blind now both to us and to them. We may never reach the big movement for which we seek, but we shall be going towards it; we shall not be buying one liberty at the price of others; we shall not be losing hold of ourselves under the sway of dangerous emotion; we shall not be playing political tricks. Even those who confine themselves to the political world will find their work easier because of us. The vote will be more valuable. Those who use it will be able to grasp more of its powers of usefulness and will use it better. And all along the way we shall be winning individual women to self-emancipation without which all else is as wind.

I do not ask the women who think me a little mad and a little bad to revise their opinion or to come out into the cold with me. I know that I cannot hope to reach these women for a long time, that it may take an abler and a gentler advocate to reach them at all. I do not ask them to cease working for the political tool. It is a good work, if it be well done; it is a task necessary to be done. And it is not by the choice of the mass of the workers that the present conditions have been made. May they get the vote quickly, very quickly, not only that women may have votes, but that they may see an end of the present domination.

To the many women who have written to me expressing their sympathy and agreement since my revolt and resignation have been made known, and asking for a new society of women rebels to be formed at once, I can offer no definite plan. I do not think that it is wise that a new movement should be immediately inaugurated. We must have time for thought before we act again. And I do not think that I am the person to take the

initiative. I am prepared to share the toil when the moment for a new concerted action arises ; for the time I must work alone.

The choice of avenues of productive feminist work is only too great. An individual woman, any small group of women, will find work waiting to their hands. Are there not helpers needed among the women who have taken up the cause of their sisters the wage-workers? Are there not ways of wakening revolt against the slaveries of wives? Do not the home-women, the last class to win personal and economic freedom, stand in need of service? Is there nothing to be done with regard to the thousands of unhappy babies which unwilling mothers bear, unwanted, into the world? The life and work of the local authorities and the communities under their care become yearly more important. Can we not find work to do here? These and a hundred kindred issues need attention, and are waiting for willing brains and hearts and hands. Some of them are outside politics; some of them are inside the sphere of political influence, and good

work done here will react upon the legislative results of enfranchisement, will hasten the pace at which the new voters will be able to go forward.

Those of us who are ourselves afire are prone to think that by our own heat we can make others burn and by our own strength can move mountains. But we cannot. We may work as quickly as we like; the lasting results are slow. Teachers will tell you that there has been no more pernicious system devised in education than that known as "payment by results." The child, and the child's mind, have been sacrificed to it. The schools have been turned into a huge machine for coining money out of the Government. It has been condemned and shattered by its own inherent vices. In the women's rebel movement we have suffered under a like evil. We have been playing for results. The woman has been sacrificed to the getting of the vote. If we turn away from this movement and condemn it we must be ready to pay the price. We shall not have publicity. We shall not have the world for an audience.

We shall drop to the level of the common-place and do our common-place work. But who will count the plaudits at the end? If we do our work as well as we can, what else matters?

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